

The Peace River Trail

by

A. M. Bezanson

Edmonton

Journal Co.

1907

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EDMONTON

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¶ Remember that EDMONTON is situated in the centre of the Province of Alberta and its territory of trade contains over 200 Post Offices, 70 towns and villages and approximately 800 retail stores. At the present time (1907) there are 435 miles of railway within this territory and the mileage is likely to be doubled within the next two years.

*For further information write The
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THE PEACE RIVER TRAIL

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ALBERTA, CANADA

FOREWORD

"I hear the tread of Nations yet to be,
The first, low wash of waves where soon shall roll a human sea ;
The ashes of an Empire here are plastic yet and warm,
The chaos of a mighty world is rounding into form."

THIS book is offered not merely as an advertising medium, but to meet the demand of the ever-increasing multitude of home-seekers for information about the still unoccupied and undeveloped areas of fertile land suitable for ranching and agricultural purposes, which lie in districts so remote as to render it next to impossible for the Government Land Department to have acquired sufficient authentic information — for free distribution — to meet the requirements of those who desire to leave the well-beaten path and lead the army of invasion into this practically unknown, but most highly favored, part of the Last West.

The writer spent the summer of 1906 travelling through the most fertile portions of this vast area, gathering the most reliable information obtainable from the few inhabitants now there, and using his eyes and his camera to the best of his ability. The results are given herewith, with the sincere hope that beneficial information, if not entertainment, may be gleaned therefrom.

I have tried to avoid exaggeration in any form and have made no statements but those which, either from personal knowledge or from the experience of responsible men long in the country, I believe to be the truth. Nor am I interested in any land or colonization scheme. I was, however, so thoroughly captivated by this new Land of Promise, that I expect to make it my future home, and I desire to assist in pointing out the trail to others that I may not lack for company.

Edmonton, Alberta
May 1st, 1907

A. M. BEZANSON



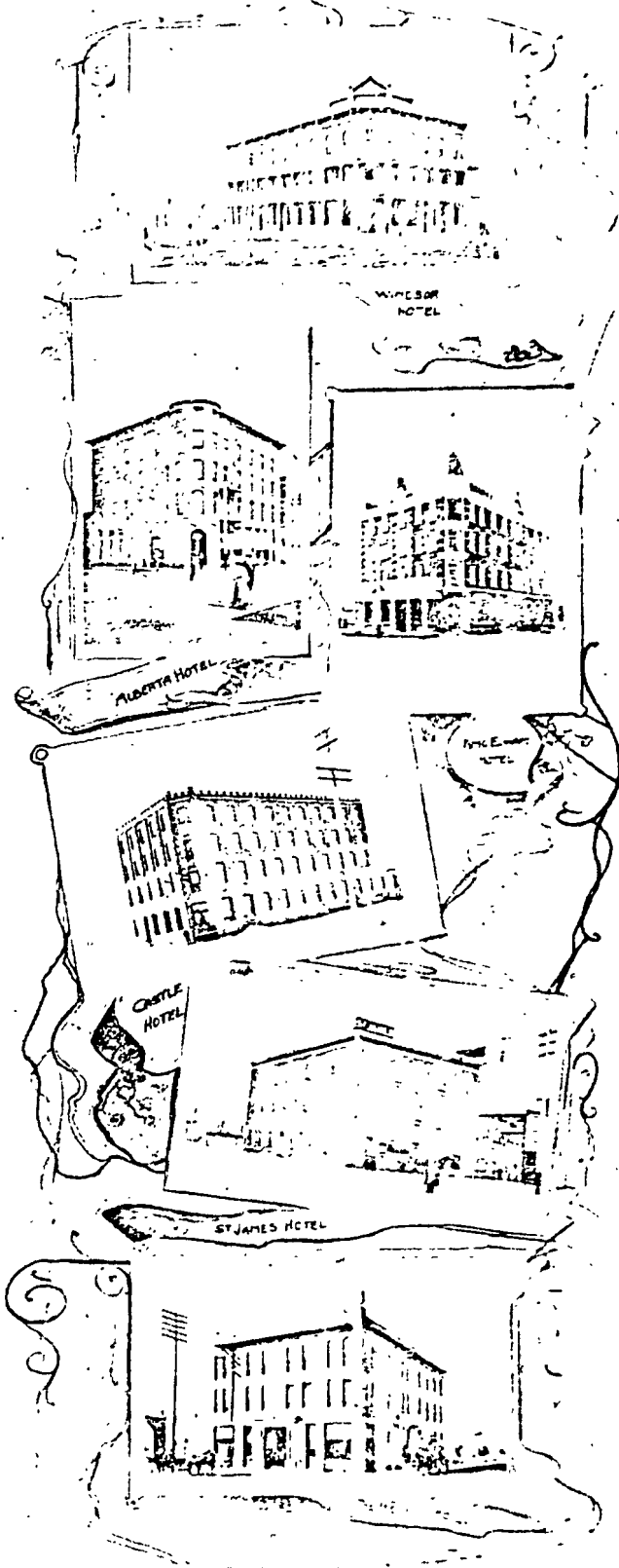
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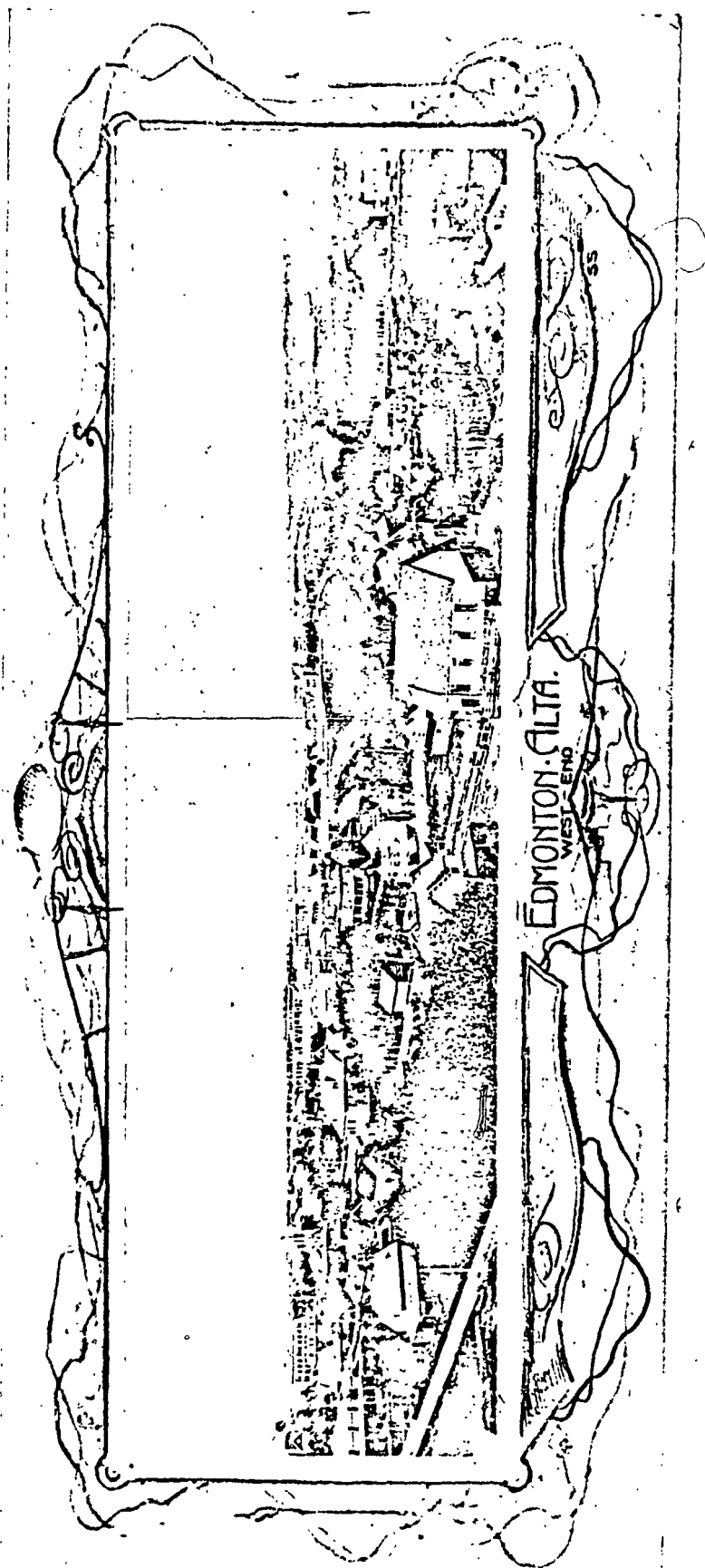
JASPER AVENUE.
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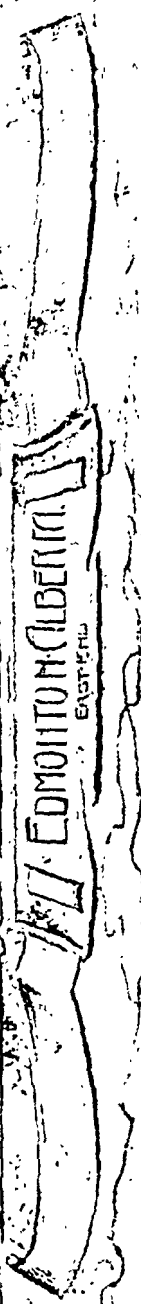
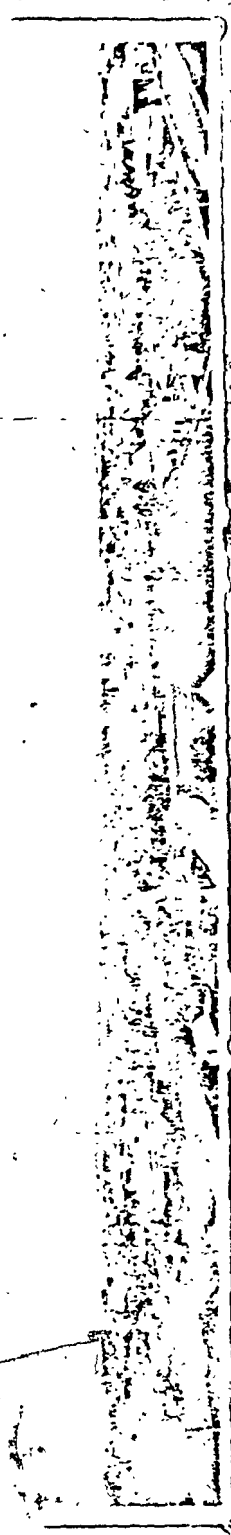


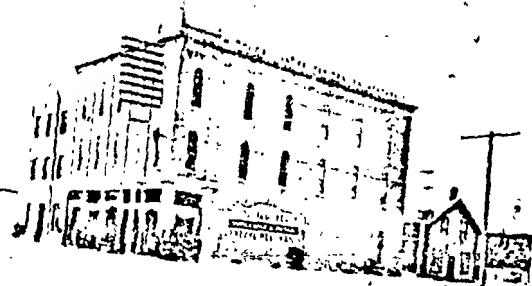
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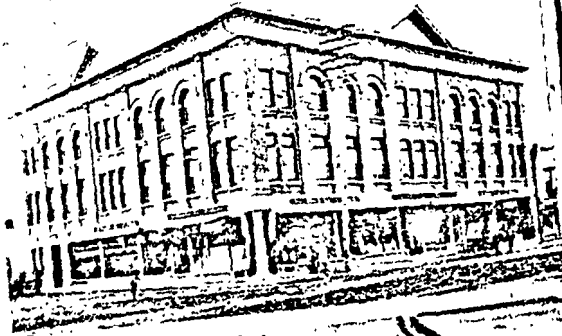
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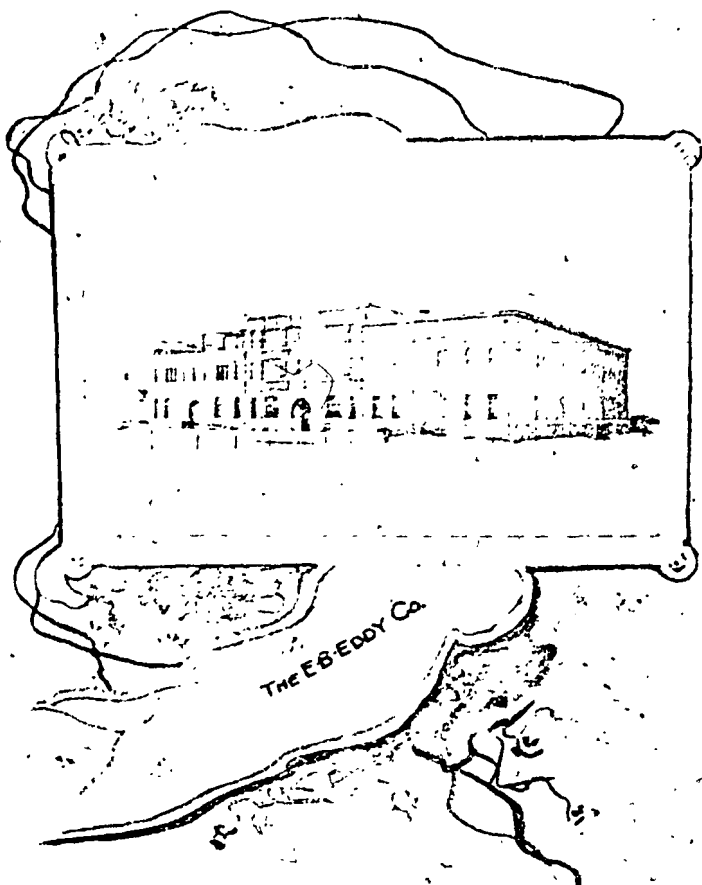


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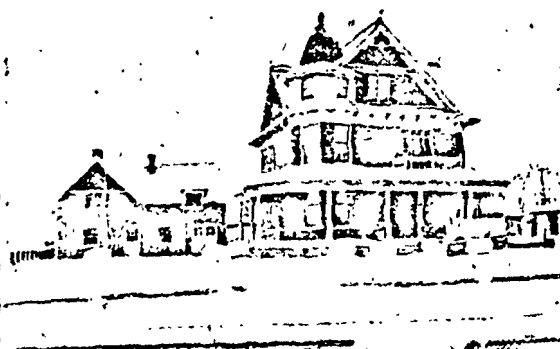
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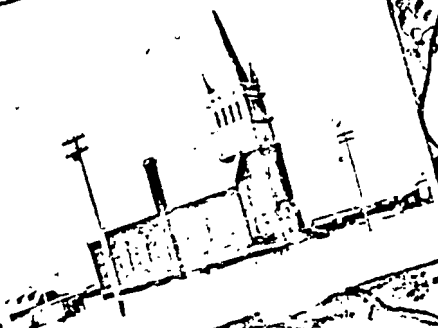


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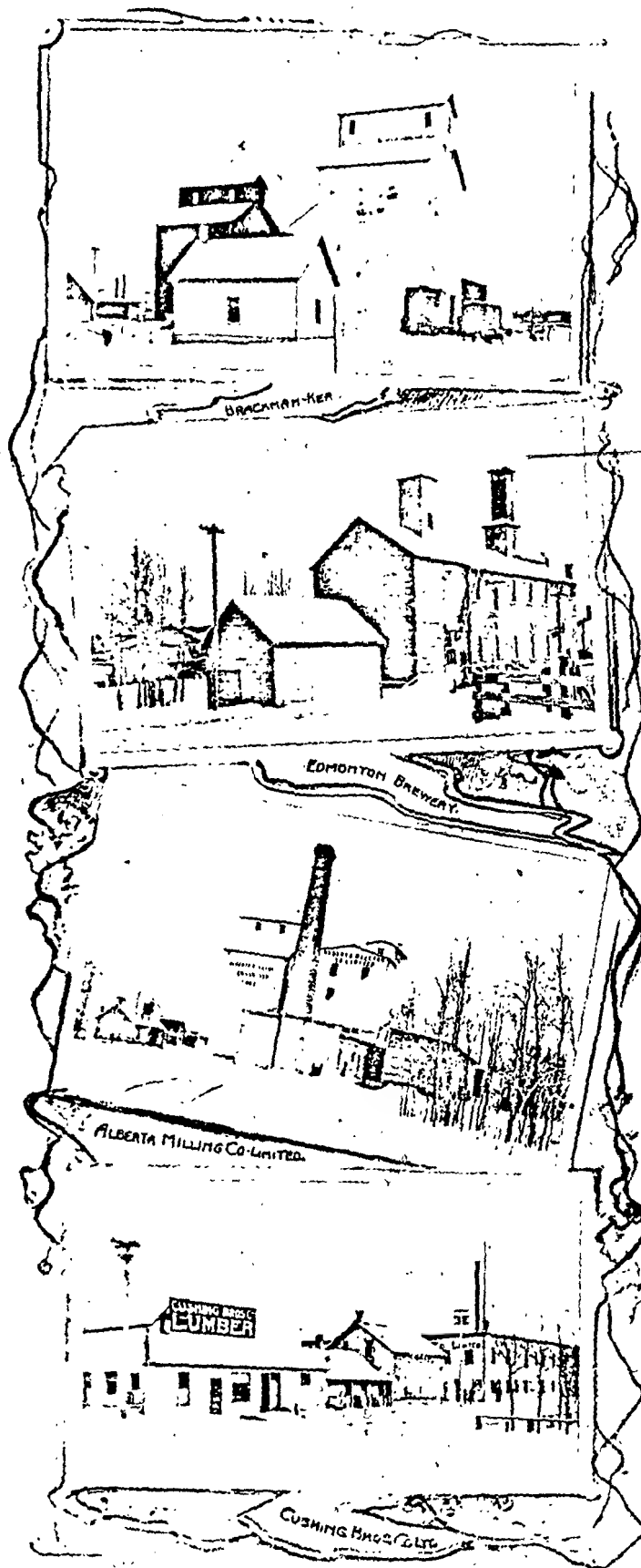
NEW
CATHOLIC
CHURCH



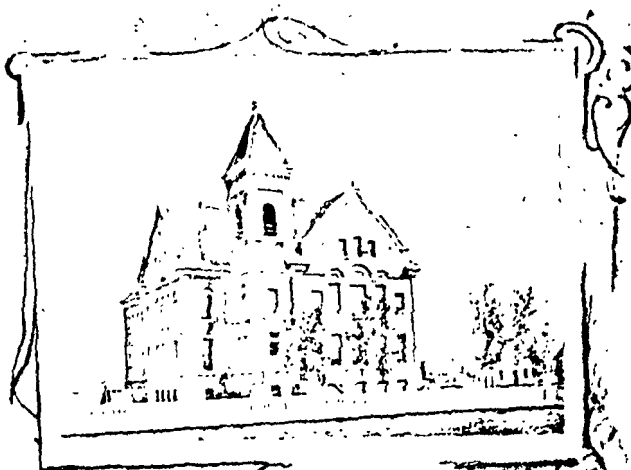
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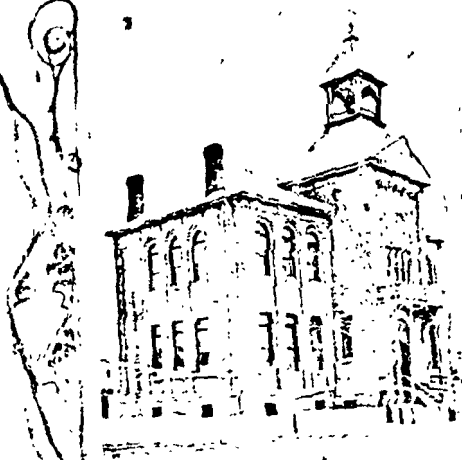
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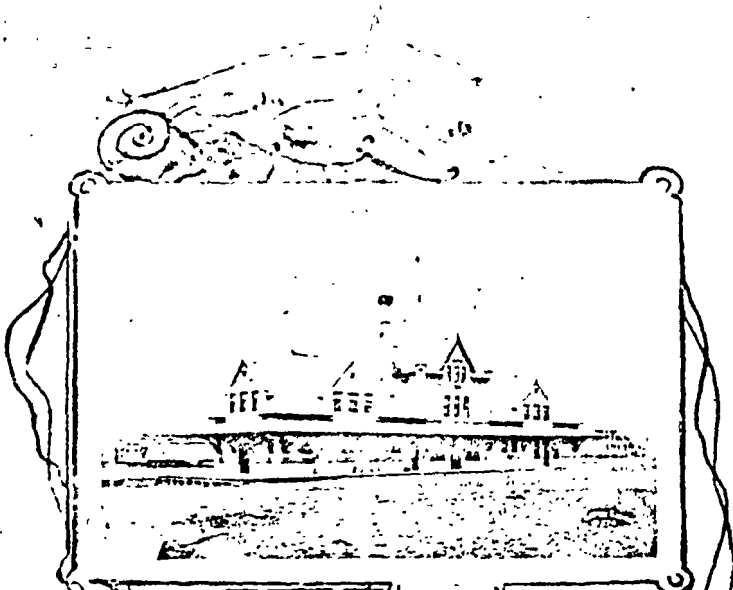
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CANADIAN NORTHERN
DEPOT



THE MARKET
SQUARE

THE LAST WEST

A well known American writer in a magazine article on the development of the now prosperous West of the United States remarked that only in far-away Alberta can a real West now be found, meaning, if I interpret correctly, a large, sparsely settled area, new in everything but natural resources, where men may, with substantial advantage to themselves, "grow up with the country," as per Horace Greely's famous dictum of half a century ago.

With the main statement I most heartily agree, but the adjective "far-away" is misapplied; for the Last West is far away in no sense other than San Francisco is "far-away" or Chicago is "far-away." Far away it certainly is in point of miles from the Atlantic coast, but what matter a few miles when one is sitting comfortably in a palace car? Far away it surely is from Montreal or from New York, yet five days on one and four days on another of the Canadian Transcontinental Railroads will bring one from either place to the very hub of this Last Real West, Edmonton; the fastest-growing, most thriving city on the Continent.

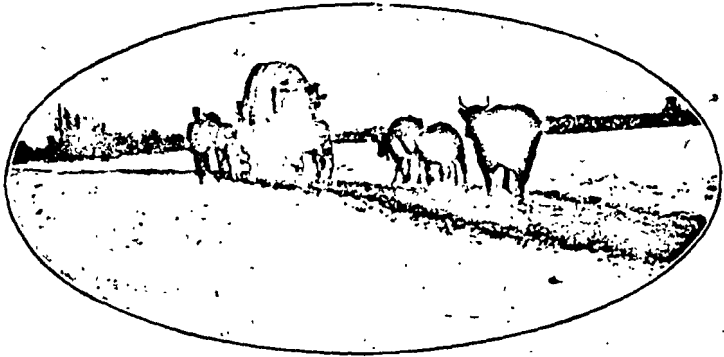
All the world knows that another great transcontinental railroad system is building westward from Winnipeg with all possible speed. It too, will tap Edmonton, and from there on will penetrate the remote districts of the Last West, seek the lowest possible grade through the mountains, and thence down to the Pacific at Kaien Island, thus giving this "far-away" West a route to the markets of the Orient—which are the markets of the future—shorter by a thousand miles than the old-time West now enjoys. Also is this "far-away" West right at the doorway to the "Far North," with its ever-increasing fur trade and its undeveloped mineral wealth. A railroad is even now building to Hudson's Bay, and with the immense natural waterways leading into the Arctic, which carry thousands of tons of freight each year to the trading posts of the North, we who live in this Last West consider ourselves not far away, but close, as close as we could wish to be to the natural markets for our produce. Inasmuch as agriculture and commerce have ever been and will ever be the mainstay of any country, and since this Last West is the largest unbroken area of fertile soil in the world,

I feel that, had I the choice, I could not improve upon its location.

The history of the remarkable development in the four years past of the portions of this Last West which are traversed by railroads is too well known to need repetition here. It is of the undeveloped portions of this great area that I wish to write.

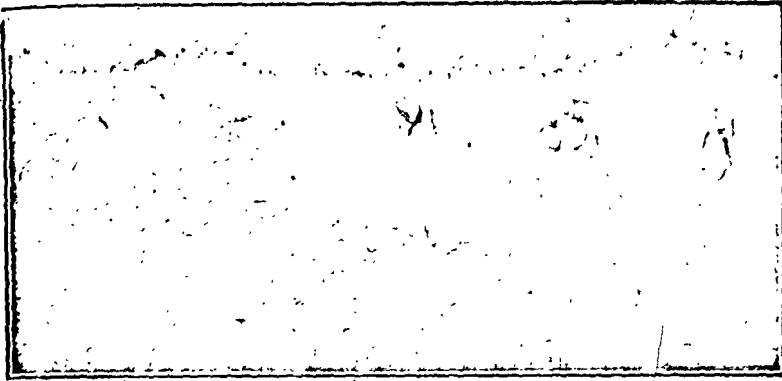
Should I undertake to name the location of this Last West I should simply name Alberta and British Columbia, north of the Canadian Pacific Railway. But this article will deal with only that portion of Alberta north of the 54th parallel, and of British Columbia east of the Rocky Mountains, an area as large as the whole of France or Germany, and I believe as rich in natural resources, with a population not exceeding 3,000 souls, most of whom are to be found in scattered settlements near the trading posts.

Great as has been the influx of settlers into all Western Canada in recent years, the supply of land within easy reach from the railroads has, to date, been equal to the demand; but the time is now at hand when the landseeker must leave the



On the Peace River Trail, March 20th, 1907

railroads behind and push out into the more remote regions. And, surely, one could not desire conditions more favorable than are to be found here. So easy is this Last West of access and so generous her rewards to those who invade her domains as to render the hardships mere child's play as compared to those experienced by the pioneers of a generation ago. Imagine a West with no hostile Indians, no sunscorched desert of burning sands, no alkaline plains devoid of vegetation, no lurking dangers of any kind to entrap the unwary traveller; but a West of broad prairies and timbered hills, where both water and feed for horses can always be found in abundance, and where the traveller can make his bed upon the ground, wherever fancy may dictate, with no fear of his rest being disturbed by intruder in any form. Imagine a West with trading posts established near the most fertile sections, connected either by great natural waterways or good roads, so that the settler need experience no difficulty in getting supplies, and where, if he be willing to work,



The First Night on the Trail

he may, by trapping during the winter, make enough money to keep him in supplies for the year. Such is the Last West of Alberta.

Perhaps you think this Last West too far north for the successful growing of crops. Then look back a very few years and you will remember that you once thought the same of Southern Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba; yes, and if you know the States, of Minnesota and the Dakotas. That no greater error ever gained a foothold in the minds of men, the immigration and crop statistics of the past five years furnish ample proof, giving as they do a record of good substantial development which has broken all precedents and set a pace that has astonished the world. History, known of all men as a repeater, repeats itself in this as in other things.

Observe how the corn and fruit belts have stretched steadily northward, year by year, until now corn is grown successfully in Ontario and in British Columbia; while the apples and

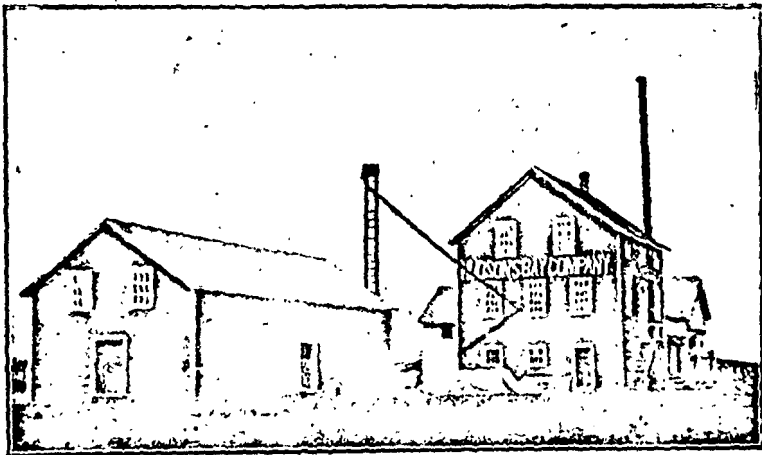


Potatoes and Wheat on Sheridan Lawrence's ranch, Ft. Vermilion, August 1st, '06

peaches from both of those provinces have a world-wide fame. Even in new Alberta such good results have been attained in the few tests made in fruit-growing as to give promise of great things in the future. A few apples of good size and quality

were grown and ripened on the trees at Edmonton last summer, while the smaller fruits leave nothing to be desired in the way of yield or quality.

But as to whether wheat and oats and vegetables can or cannot be grown successfully in the Last West we do not need to speculate or theorize—we know. We have the facts established by thorough and exhaustive tests, for although this Last West is a vast and unsettled region, the Hudson's Bay Company has been trafficking in furs within its environs for upwards of one hundred and fifty years, and the fur trader must have flour. Where, think you, would he get it in such a country? Would he freight it overland hundreds of miles when all around him were thousands of broad acres of fertile soil? Not he! He would raise the wheat right at his door; and so he has done, and so have done the missionaries, and a few of their dusky converts. Then did this ancient and honorable Company rise to the occasion and bring machinery from away-south, where the railroads were; hundreds and hundreds of miles did they bring it, and they built mills and ground the wheat, and, lo! they had flour of the very best. And so, to-day, this great Company has flour mills making flour of the finest quality, from wheat grown year after year right beside the mill, away down at Fort Vermilion, five hundred miles northwest of Edmonton.



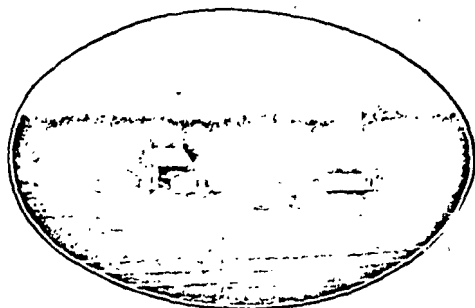
Hudson's Bay Co's Flour-mill and Sawmill at Ft. Vermilion

In fact, all the flour for that post and settlement, with a population of about seven hundred, is ground there from wheat grown in the surrounding country. Oats for the horses and barley for the hogs are grown there, too, in abundance.

I make particular mention of Fort Vermilion at this time because of its being so far north as to serve as a fair criterion of what can be done in the whole of the great Last West; but quite as thorough tests of the temper of the soil and climate have been made in many other places, of which we will learn later.

As Edmonton is the hub of this vast region, so is it the supply depot, and so will it continue to be for generations to come. With the advent of the Grand Trunk Pacific it will become the principal railway centre of Western Canada, and with the settlement of the Last West it will inevitably become the milling and manufacturing centre. Coal, so necessary to industrial development, is found close to the surface in practically unlimited quantities, while the lumber and mineral wealth of the mountains to the west will, with the building of the Grand Trunk Pacific and the extension of the Canadian Northern Railway to the Pacific Coast, find its outlet through Edmonton. The Hudson's Bay Company's trading posts in the north and northwest are supplied and managed from here. Likewise are those of Revillon Brothers Limited, a firm new to the north country but old in the fur business.

Eighteen wholesale houses are working overtime to keep up with their orders from the small towns in the surrounding country. Several large machine shops, saw mills, sash and door factories and other industries of like order, which



Eggie's Homestead, 50 miles North of Edmonton

betoken the development of both town and country, are taxed to their utmost capacity to keep up with the increasing demand for machinery and building material of all kinds.

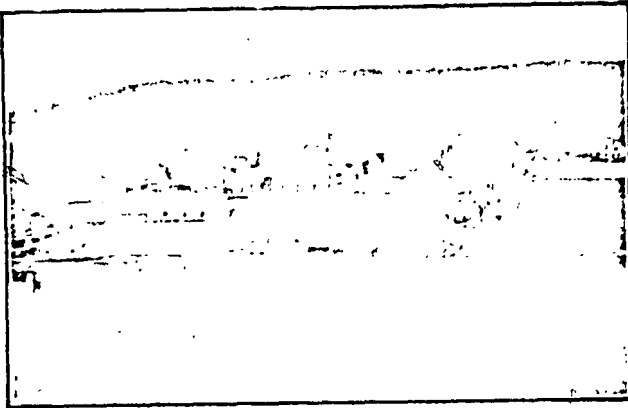
Scarcely a week passes without seeing the representative of some eastern manufacturing or jobbing house looking for a site for a plant here, and some large American firms are showing their faith in the future of the place as a distributing centre by establishing branch houses. The Canadian Pacific Railway, which for twenty years ignored the demands of Edmonton for recognition and fair treatment, by building no farther than to Strathcona on the south bank of the river, is now seeking entrance by means of a high level bridge, to be built at a cost of \$3,000,000. The population has grown from 2,652 in 1901 to 11,534 in August, 1906, a larger percentage of increase than shown by any city in Canada. And this new city ranks fifth in building permits for the year of 1906, the figures reaching the grand total of \$1,868,069, nearly two million dollars. Building permits issued during the months of January and February, 1907, the two poorest months of the year, aggregate over half a million dollars—the figures for February alone reaching \$373,790. The Edmonton Clearing House, organized on July 1st, 1906, has shown weekly bank clearings approximating three quarters of a million dollars, placing Edmonton in

twelfth place among Canadian cities in volume of banking business.

Public utilities are owned and operated by the city, assuring the citizen of the best service obtainable at the lowest possible price. Valuation for assessment purposes is made upon land values only. Improvements are not considered. The city has a highly efficient system of fire protection and has in consequence been singularly free from fires. The city stands high and dry upon the north bank of the Saskatchewan River, which furnishes a permanent water supply and excellent drainage. Realty values have increased 300 per cent. in the past two years, and yet there has been no boom—only a steady, substantial growth, an adjustment to natural conditions, a city coming into its own by right of its natural advantages and its location.

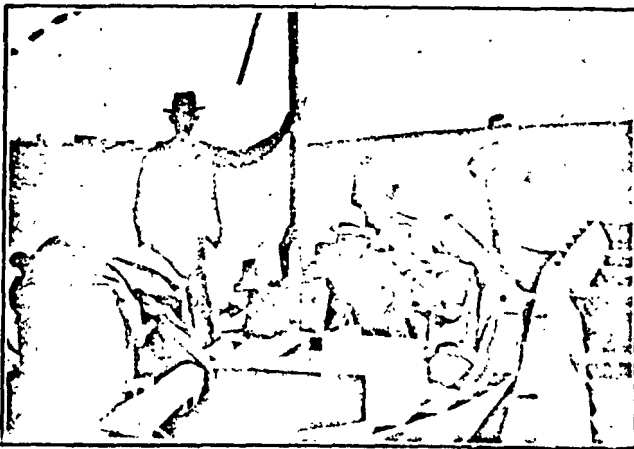
None but the Omnipotent power can stop Edmonton's growth. She is the city of destiny for the Last West. Long before the homesteads in the immense district which she supplies are all taken, she will have a population of 100,000.





ATHABASCA LANDING

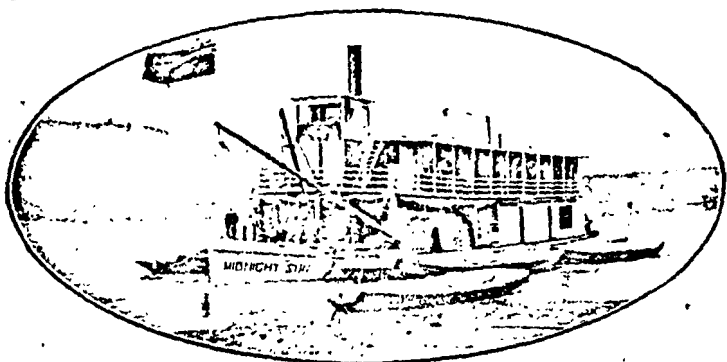
Athabasca Landing is the post of most importance in the Last West after Edmonton and the railways are left behind, as it is the final distributing point for freight to the north and northwest trading posts. Here, during the summer months, one may see whole fleets of scows, loaded with supplies, embarking for the north. The Hudson's Bay Company, Hyslop & Nagle, and the Swiggart Trading Company, take each as many as eighteen scows to the fleet, and what with the missions and free-traders, of whom there are quite a number, one may see loaded scows leaving here almost every week during the summer. The crews, generally five men to the boat, are made up almost entirely of Breeds—the full-blood Indian is a rarity nowadays—and a happy-go-lucky, irresponsible lot they are, with no care for the morrow or for their employer's interest; satisfied if their backs are covered and their stomachs filled. They are, however, very capable boatmen once they are away from the white man's environment and the white man's fire-water, but not at all to be trusted when near to either. Among



Second Stage of the Journey

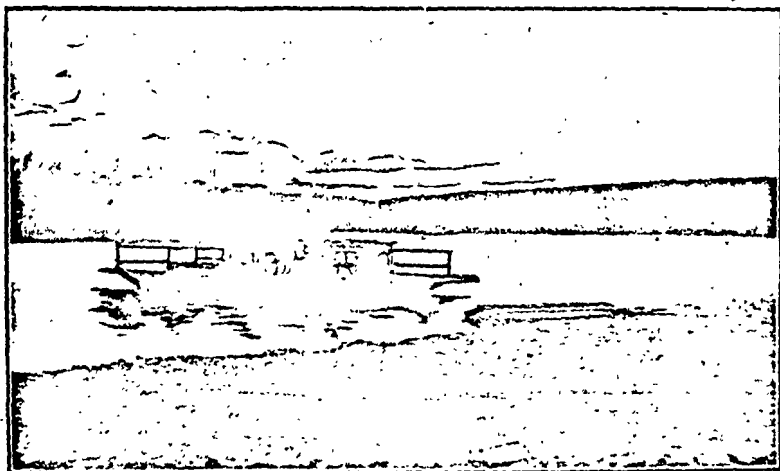
the traders there appears to be a universal longing for the advent of enough white men to do this and other work now done by Breeds. This one industry alone would furnish summer employment for several hundred settlers.

Most of these scows are sold down river for the lumber they contain, as one will carry fur equivalent in value to ten or twenty loads of merchandise, and the return trip being upstream if would, of course, be folly to bring back any more boats than absolutely necessary; hence a great number of boats must be built every year, and quite a number of men find profitable employment at this work during the summer.



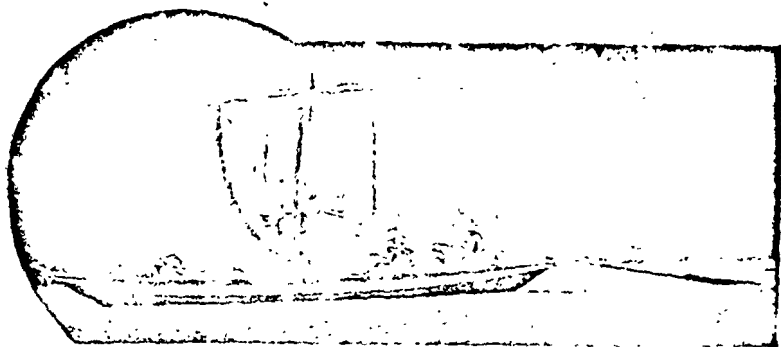
The "Midnight Sun," built and operated by Jim Woods at the Landing, takes a very important part in the transportation of freight both up and down river, running up as far as the mouth of Slave River, 72 miles, and down to Grand Rapids, 165 miles from the Landing. Very comfortable accommodation for passengers is likewise found on this boat and an interesting trip awaits the traveller who takes passage on the "Midnight Sun" during the long summer days.

There are few valleys on the Athabasca, the river having cut out a trough-like depression 300 feet deep and about two miles from rim to rim. The sides of this trough, from the



The Ferry, Athabasca Landing

source of the river in the Rockies clear down to Fort McMurray, are for the most part covered with a heavy growth of aspen and spruce, in some places extending back for miles. Back from the river, however, there are many fine open prairies. The soil is a sandy loam with a clay sub-soil of great depth, and has been proven to be very productive under cultivation. C. B. Major at Baptiste Lake, fifteen miles northwest of the Landing, raised seven thousand bushels of wheat, oats and



Down the Athabasca with a Fair Wind

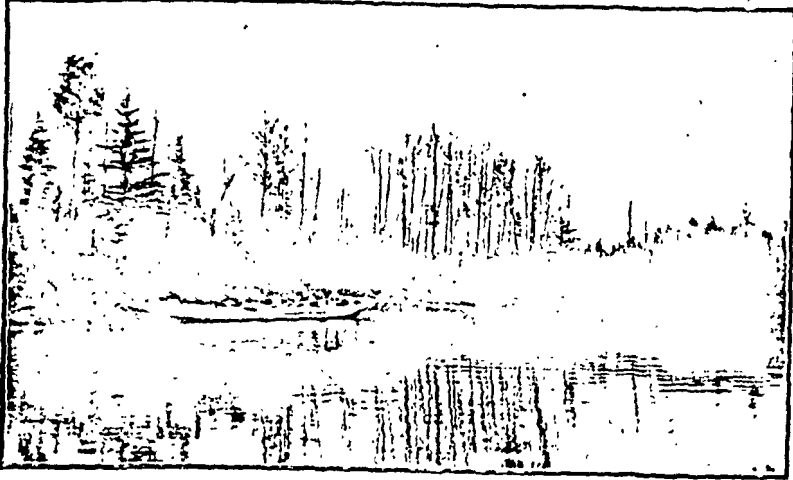
barley last year. His oats yielded by actual measure 100 bushels per acre, and he will find a ready market for them to freight teams at 75 cents to \$1.00 per bushel. Mr. Major says that in his six years residence here he has never seen a crop failure.

There are a considerable number of other settlers near the Landing who have small fields under cultivation, and they, one and all, report the best of success from their efforts thus far. The larger portion of the country for fifty miles south from the Landing, is, however, more suited to stock-raising than to farming, the surface being quite rough and the soil sandy. It is also covered with a thick growth of small aspen and willow, which is hard to clear for farming but makes fine shelter and forage for stock.

North of the Athabasca River the country has been explored very little, but trappers and Indians tell of many fine stretches of level and fertile prairie. A small colony of Americans went in and settled on land about five miles north of Athabasca Landing early last winter, and are thus far so highly satisfied with their choice that they are urging their friends to do likewise.

Mr. Fielders, the road inspector for the Athabasca and Lesser Slave Lake district, made a thorough inspection of the country along the north bank of the river from Athabasca Landing to the mouth of Lesser Slave River in January, with a view to building a road on that side to connect with the one now in use from the mouth of Lesser Slave River to the west end of Lesser Slave Lake, a work which will be commenced in the early spring and pushed with all possible speed so as to be finished not later than June 1st. He says that the surface of

the country is very favorable for the building of roads, being quite level and very little cut by ravines, creeks, etc., making very few bridges necessary, so that the department anticipates no difficulty in having the road finished in time for the summer travel to the Peace River country. This is the connecting link



The Noon Hour, Athabasca River

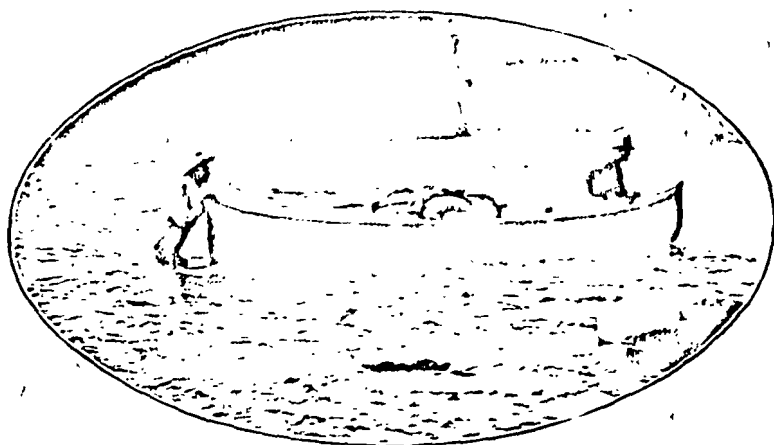
in the chain which will give a wagon road from Edmonton to Fort Graham on the Findlay River, distant 900 miles via Athabasca Landing, Lesser Slave Lake, Peace River Landing, Fort St. John and Hudson's Hope. Nine hundred miles by wagon road, and through a beautiful country, rich as the richest in natural resources and comparatively in a state of nature; a trip worth any one's while.



A young Breed and her Child

In regard to the country through which this new piece of road will pass, Mr. Fielders, who is a man of twenty-five years' experience in Alberta, is enthusiastic. He says: "There are many large stretches of fine level prairie upon which the natural growth proves the soil beneath to be exceedingly fertile. There is plenty of timber near at hand for fuel and building purposes for the first settlers. The rivers furnish a cheap means of transportation till the railways come, and the climate is the same

as at Edmonton." What more favorable conditions could new settlers ask?



"A Tenderfoot navigating his own Boat is likely to get his feet wet"

LESSER SLAVE LAKE

Leaving Athabasca Landing for Slave Lake and Peace River points we come to the mouth of Lesser Slave River, seventy-two miles above the Landing. A beautiful river is the Lesser Slave, but very hard to navigate for the first twenty-two miles going up, as it is for that distance a succession of rapids in which a Tenderfoot, navigating his own boat, is likely to get his feet wet.

Travelling up Slave River the banks become lower and lower, the surrounding country more level, and the timber more scarce, till at the top of the rapids we find open patches of prairie which increase in number and dimensions as we travel up-stream, till within ten miles of the mouth of the lake one may see stretches of fine level prairie, several miles in extent. Here, in July, the blue-joint was four feet high, and in September it was still standing tall and straight, apparently little hurt by frost. Tom Lyllac, a retired buffalo hunter, and a few natives have cabins at the mouth of the Lake, but they evidently consider farming beneath their dignity, at least none of it is done by them.



Tom Lyllac's

The York boats and scows carrying freight are tracked up by means of a long line hitched to six or eight lusty natives who walk along shore and make horses of themselves. All the freight going into the Northwest during the summer has been



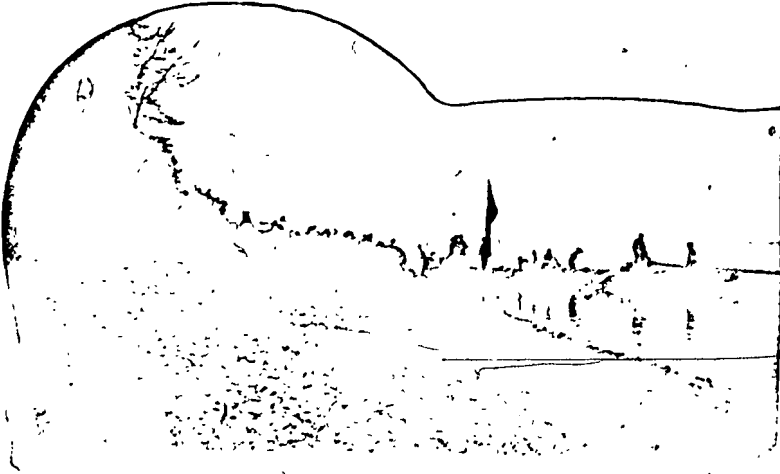
A difficult piece of Tracking, lower Athabasca River

handled for years in this manner. Is it any wonder that manufactured goods are high on the Peace River or that transportation is the all-important problem of the Last West?

If the wind is fair we sail across the lake; if not, we wait till it is. Then in our York-boat or canoe we scoot down before the wind the seventy-eight miles in an easy day. The lake is never so wide but one can see the rough, irregular shore-line, with the Swan Hills in the background on the south, broken about midway of the lake by the Swan River valley, another fine stretch of fertile prairie reaching away to the south. For the rest the lake shores are rough, hilly, and covered with a dense growth of spruce and aspen, most of which is too small to be of practical value.

It is my opinion that Lesser Slave Lake is slowly, but surely drying up. It is now so shallow as to make it impossible in many places to get within a half-mile of shore with a canoe, and at the upper or west end there is a dry, sandy beach extending out one-quarter mile beyond where once landed the Hudson's Bay Company freight boats. Buffalo Lake, which was in reality a small extension on the west end of Lesser Slave Lake, is now an ever-dwindling expanse of muck and a fading memory. Whereas the boats once landed at the Hudson's Bay post on Buffalo Lake they now land at Shaw's Point, on Lesser Slave Lake, eight miles from the post, which necessitates an eight mile haul with wagons and gives the traveller a welcome opportunity to move himself about after the trip across the Lake. In the main body of the lake, from Shaw's Point to the outlet—Slave River—there is still, and probably will be for years to come, a channel of good depth down the centre,

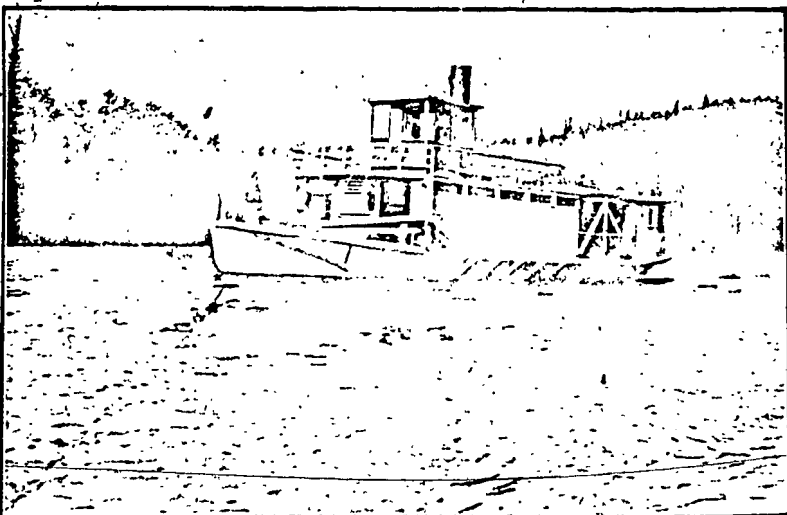
but there are very few points between, where a boat of two-foot draught can land. At present, however, they have no cause to do so, as in the whole length and breadth of the Lake the only



Unloading Freight at Shaw's Point

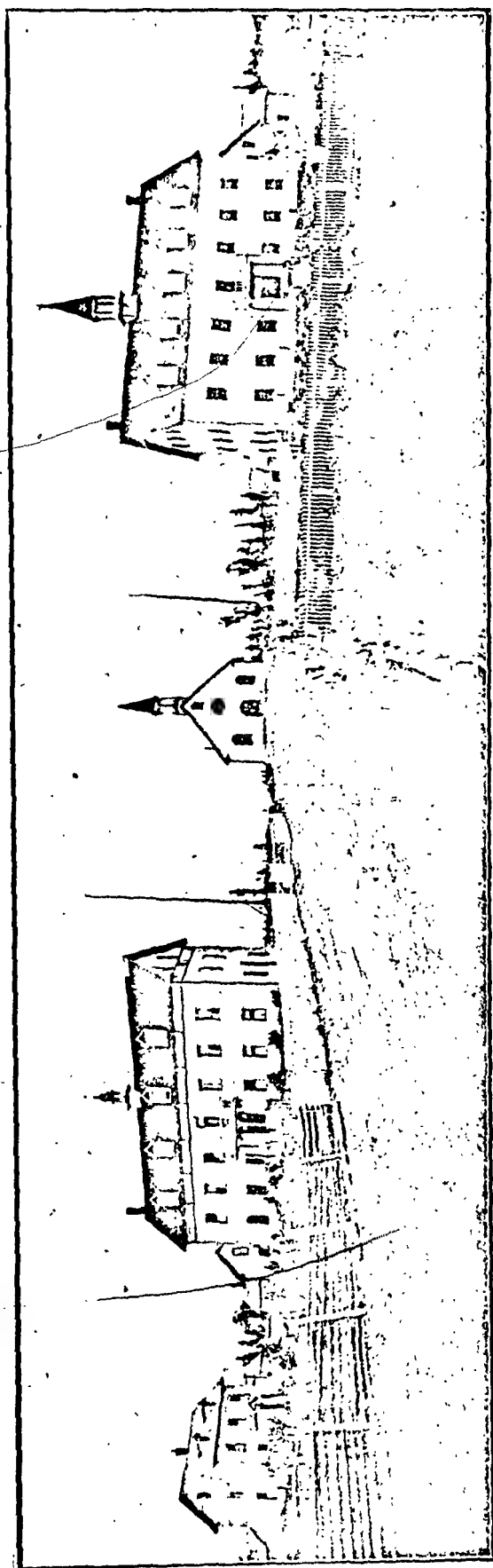
white man's habitation is a fisherman's camp, nine miles above the outlet. A crew of several men work here during the winter catching white-fish, of which there seems to be an inexhaustible supply. With the limited transportation facilities at present these fish can, of course, only be shipped fresh during the winter months, but with the advent of railroads this will become a very important industry.

No steamboat whistle has as yet awakened the slumbering echoes of Lesser Slave Lake, but the "Northern Light," destined



The Steamer, "Northern Light"

for that honor, was built at Athabasca Landing last spring and was run up as far as the rapids in Slave River, where, being too late for the spring freshets, the depth of water was insufficient,



SCHOOL

CHURCH

MONASTERY

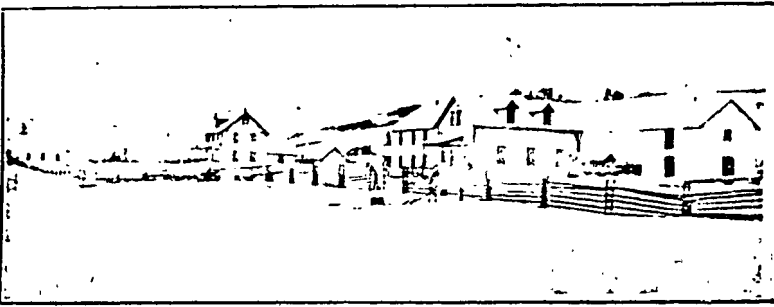
ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION, LESSER SLAVE LAKE

These buildings were built entirely from material manufactured right on the ground by the Missionaries themselves

and she ran aground. Her owner, Capt. Barber, persevered however, and succeeded in making his way up ten miles of the rapids, from which point he anticipates no trouble in taking her on to the Lake in the early spring of this year.

At the western end of the Lake the industry and energy of the Canadian pioneers is everywhere apparent. Not only have the two trading Companies—Hudson's Bay and Revillon Brothers—commodious and well constructed stores and warehouses, but the Royal North West Mounted Police and the Catholic and English Church Missions as well, have buildings that would do credit to any community.

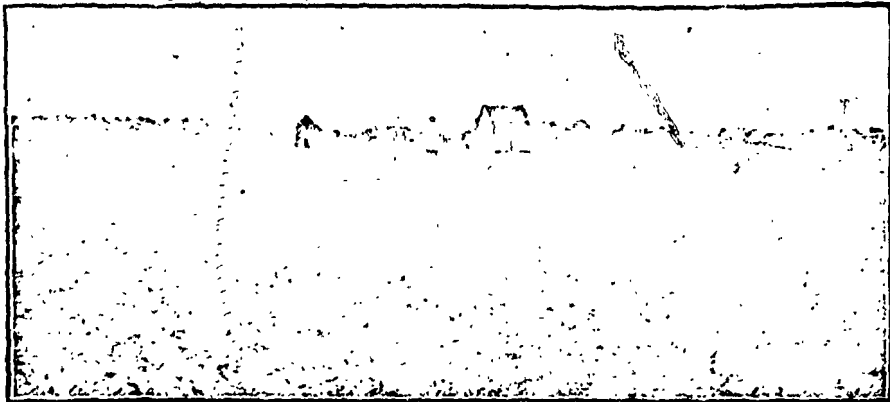
A great work is being done in this Last West by each of these missions. They maintain free schools, where the dusky child of the forest may obtain equal advantages with his white brothers, and churches where spiritual training is impartially administered to all. Wonderful institutions are these



English Church Mission, Lesser Slave Lake

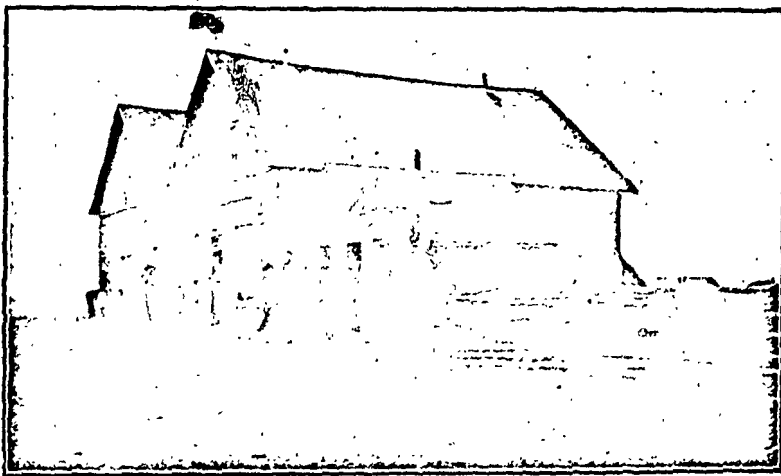
missions of the Northland, taking as strong and active a part in the industrial development of the country as in the spiritual development of its people. At Slave Lake, Peace River Landing, Vermilion, Spirit River, in fact, wherever there is a trading post of importance, there also is a mission, and a mission farm well tilled, well managed and well improved. The good fathers at the Catholic, and the good ministers at the Protestant missions do all the work themselves. They raise their own grain, grind their own flour, build their own buildings, and still find time to help their neighbor and educate his children. No man in the Northland gets so close to the native as the missionary, and no man wins the confidence of the dusky children of the forest as he does. He enters into their daily life, learns their language, sympathizes with them in their simple joys and sorrows, and teaches them practical things as well as things spiritual. These be teachers by example as well as precept. They are ever the first to build saw mills and grist mills at the different settlements, and not only do they saw their own lumber and grind their own flour, but that for the community as well, and at a very reasonable price. All this great work is carried on without outside aid. They carve their own way and build up their schools,

churches and homes by their own perseverance, energy and industry.



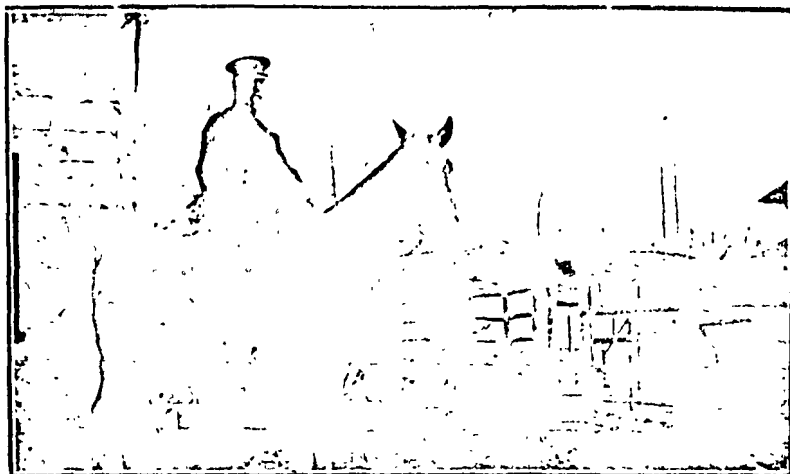
English Church Mission Farm, Prairie River

Never was an institution more suited to the peculiar needs of a country than is the Royal Northwest Mounted Police to Western Canada. So perfect is their system and so complete the protective chain reaching out from the centres of civilization in every direction to the uttermost limits of the land, that it has implanted in the breasts of frontiersman and Indian alike a respect for law and order never before attained in any country. Lawlessness and crime are almost unknown in this part of the Last West, a condition due almost solely to the presence of one or more Mounted Policeman at every trading post or hamlet. Lesser Slave Lake is their headquarters for the Last West, and very neat and homelike are their buildings here. Besides the usual complement of officers and men, they have a doctor here



Revillon's Trading Post, Lesser Slave Lake

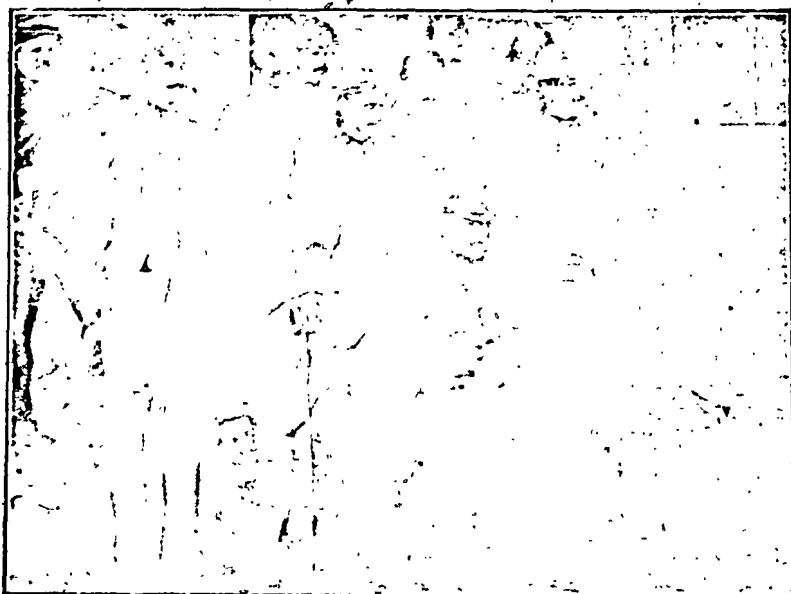
who attends the sick, regardless of race or color, for miles around. So the Slave Lake Settlement has nearly as many advantages, socially and otherwise, as many railroad towns.



Major Constantine, Superintendent "G" Division R.N.W.M.P., at the Barracks,
o o Lesser Slave Lake



Mounted Police Barracks



R.N.W.M.P. Officers and Men stationed at Lesser Slave Lake

The country immediately surrounding the settlement is rough and wooded, but directly across the shallow pond, which was once Buffalo Lake, is one of the finest stretches of natural prairie one could wish to see. Here, on September 24th, I found blue-joint and pea-vine that would hide a man standing erect, and the crops grown last year by the half-dozen settlers who are now there could not be beaten anywhere for quality or yield. I took samples of winter wheat, the first years' trial in that country, and found the berry plump and hard and of enormous size. No signs of damage by frost could I detect on any of the crops here, nor could I learn of their having been so damaged in previous years. The soil is a black, slightly sandy loam, about ten inches deep on a brown clay subsoil of great depth, making a perfect combination. It works up soft and mellow whether wet or dry, hence is much more easily tilled than a heavy black soil. Each settler here has a few head of stock which I found to be rolling fat, and I learn that horses are kept in that condition all through the winter months, simply roaming at will over the broad prairie and feeding on the native grasses.

Two townships were surveyed on this prairie during the past year, and good evidence of the value in which this land is held by those familiar with the conditions here is shown by the fact that nearly every member of the survey party took a homestead.

On the occasion of my first visit at the Slave Lake post on July 22nd, we had new potatoes of fine size and quality from the garden there, and peas, beets, radishes, lettuce, etc., etc., were already an old story, which shows that country to be in the vegetable line, not far behind many places much farther south.



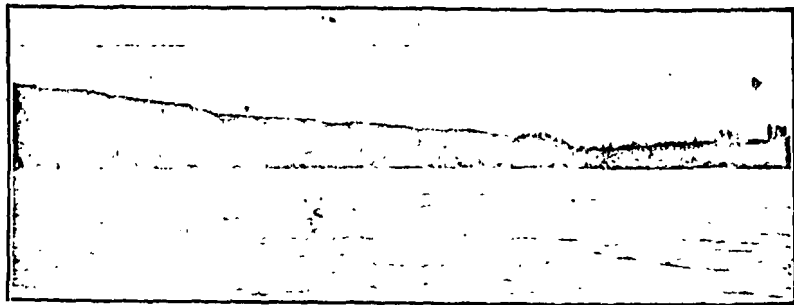
A Wheat field west of Lesser Slave Lake



THE FAR FAMED PEACE RIVER

The first view of this mighty river to greet the traveller upon his arrival from Lesser Slave Lake is one to warm the heart and stir the blood of the most apathetic of nature lovers.

Reaching from one's very feet away back into the distance till lost in a curve of the hills, the broad ribbon of sparkling water, reflecting the green of the timbered islands with the blue of the sky, seems to carry in its depths the secret of the ages past, as it surely does the secret of those to come, for the millions upon millions of acres of fertile country which it drains. Here, too, one straightway finds that impression of the Peace River valley, which has become current wherever the Peace River is known: to be an erroneous one. Properly speaking, there is no Peace River valley. From where the river breaks through the continental divide, making a canon which is destined to become world-famed and the bottom of which no living man has ever seen, to Fort Vermilion, a distance of 550 miles, its bed is a trough-like depression of ever-decreasing depth below the level of the surrounding country, ranging from

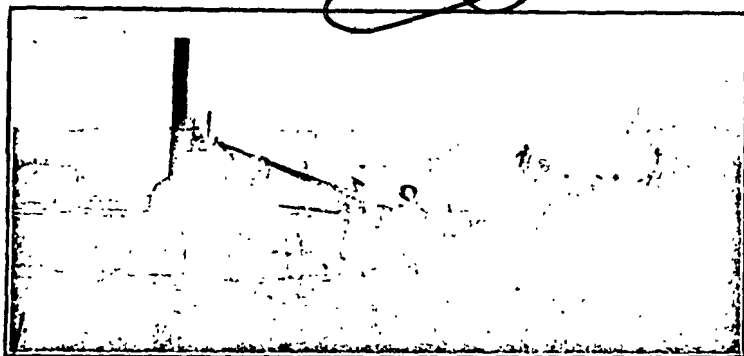


Mouth of the Peace River Canon

1,200 feet at the canon's mouth to about sixty feet at Fort Vermilion. The average width of this trough is about three

miles from rim to rim. It widens out occasionally, leaving small valleys at the bottom. The largest of these lies on the north bank of the river, just above Peace River Landing, where the river makes an abrupt turn to the north, which direction it keeps for 300 miles. This valley is about twenty miles in length, and varies in width from one-eighth to one mile. The land has been surveyed and, with the exception of a few pieces previously held by white settlers and the missions, allotted to Indians.

Allie Brick, M.P.P. for the Peace River district, has lived here for twenty-four years, and in that time has never seen a crop failure. Certain it is that his hundred-acre wheat field, standing tall, straight, yellow, and ready for the harvest when I saw it on July 28th last year, looked anything but a failure.

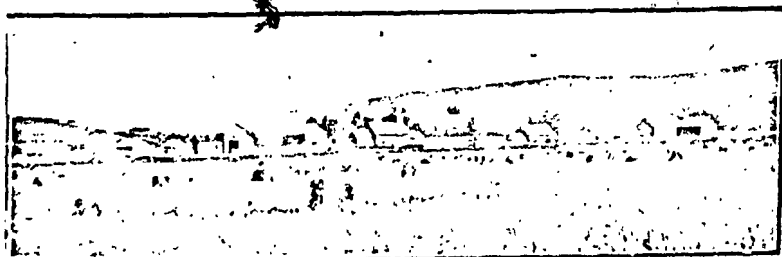


Allie Brick's Threshing Outfit at work, September 14th, '05

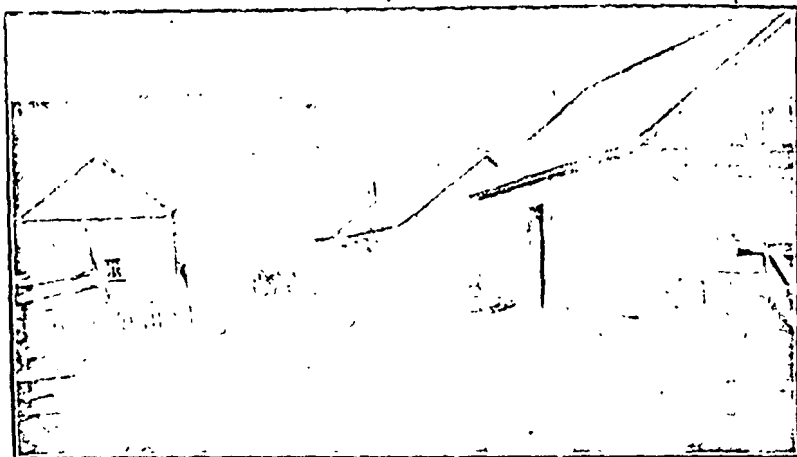
Upon my return to this valley on September 14th, I saw, instead of this hundred-acre field of wheat, 2,500 bushels of wheat in the granary, which several disinterested travellers whom I met there pronounced No. 1 Northern.

The Catholic and English Church Missions have each a fine farm here where wheat, oats, barley, and vegetables of all kinds are grown in abundance. The Catholic Mission has also a saw mill and grist mill, where lumber is sawn and flour ground for the settlers in the surrounding country. They also own and operate a stern-wheel steamer built by themselves from lumber sawn in their own mill.

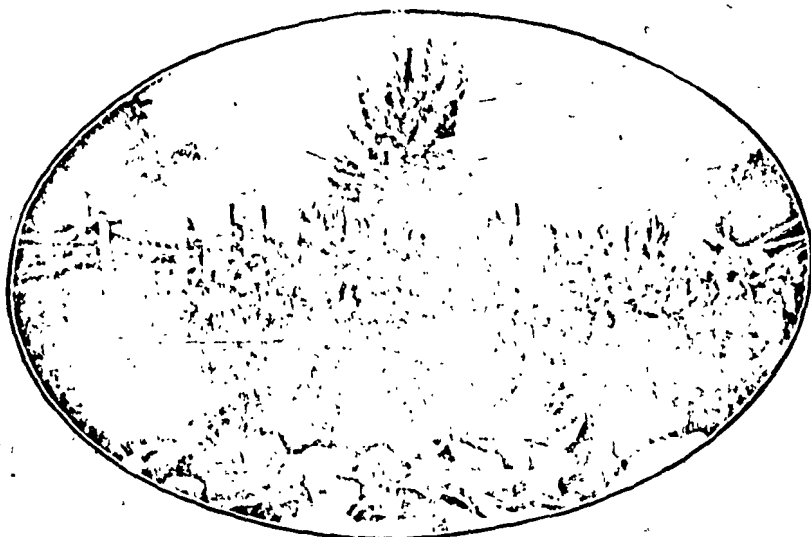
I saw tomatoes of good size and quality grown and ripened on the vines here last year, and cabbage and sweet corn, as well



Catholic Mission Farm, above Peace River Landing



Hudson's Bay Co. Post at Peace River Landing



Cabbage and Corn unhurt by frost, September 15th



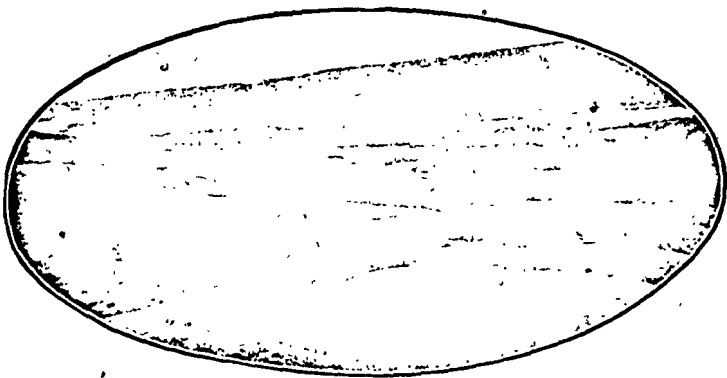
Flowers in another part of same Garden

as many vegetables of the root species, were standing in the garden unhurt by frost on September 16th. In another part of this same garden, which belongs to Mr. George, Hudson's Bay factor at Peace River Landing, were asters, pansies, sweet peas, and carnations, blooming in profusion.

This is an ideal country for stock, most of the native grasses, cure on the ground, making very nutritious winter feed. The chinooks keep the snow down so that horses experience no difficulty in feeding on the ranges all winter, coming out fat in the spring. There are two herds of wild horses ranging on either side of the river between Peace River Landing and Fort St. John. They are not native to the country as they are made up partly of horses which escaped from the prospectors' parties travelling through during the Klondike rush, and quite a large percentage are descendants from a herd taken in by the Hudson's Bay Company some years ago. It is a sure thing that these horses are not put in and fed during the winter, yet they keep in such good condition that all efforts to catch them have proven ineffectual. This seems to me to be conclusive proof of the mildness of the winter climate.

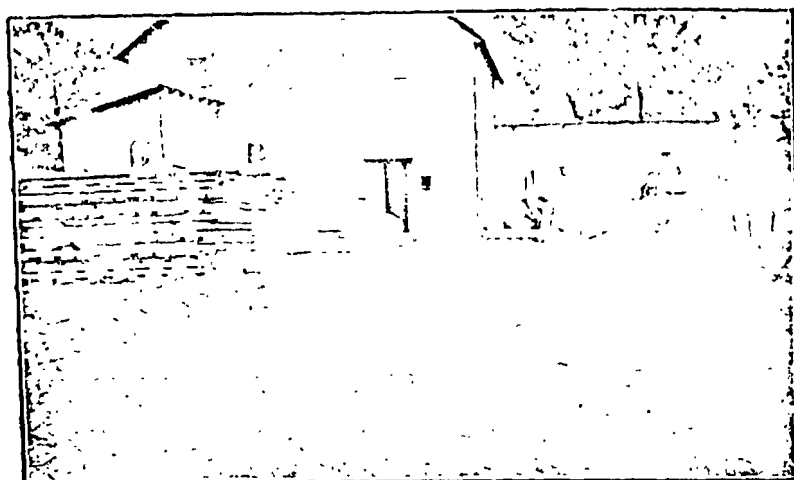
But I found more proof. Neither at Place River Landing, Dunvegan, Fort St. John, Moberly Lake, Spirit River, in fact nowhere in the whole country could I find an Indian who had ever put up hay or a shelter for his ponies for the winter; nor could I learn of any losses from privations. In fact, whites and Indians alike agree in saying that horses so wintered come out in good condition in the spring. Can as much be said of Manitoba, of Montana, or of North Dakota?

Leaving the Peace River Landing settlement for Dunvegan or Fort St. John, we climb the face of the hill just back of the English Mission. The ascent is quite steep, but the road is

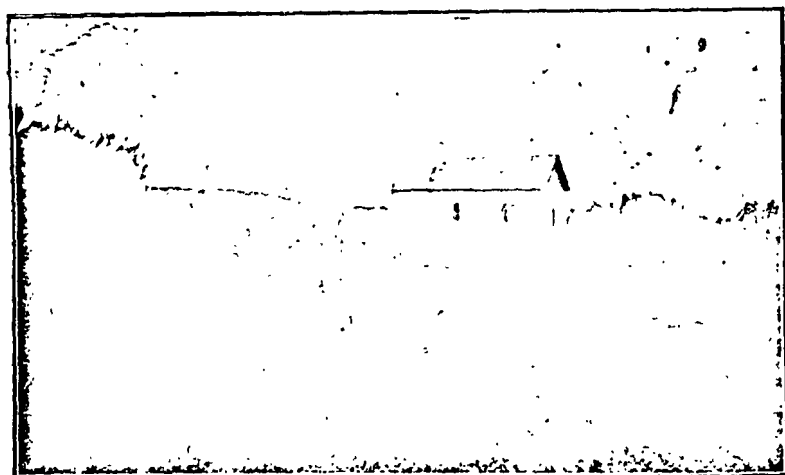


A series of pyramids and hollows, hummocks and cones

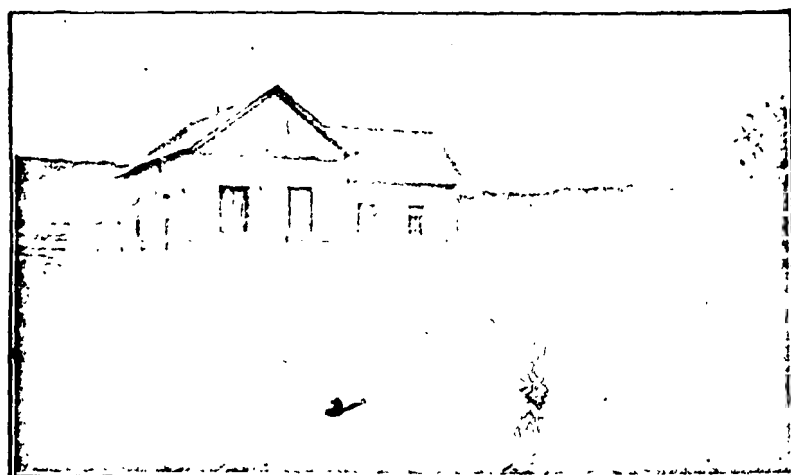
good, and our horses do not mind it much. The face of the hill is a series of pyramids and hollows, hummocks and cones. The result of centuries of erosion by the river, but all is now covered with a thick growth of grass, making a fine stock range, as these banks are seldom snow covered. Having



R. C. Mission Sawmill and Gristmill



The English Mission Church



The English Mission.

reached the top of the hill we are on the real level of the country, at this point about 800 feet above the river.

And who could stand here and see the broad level prairie stretching away to the north and west, miles and miles and miles of it, with the great river beneath, hurrying on its way to the Arctic, a willing worker, ready to carry the future products of these broad acres to the trading posts of the north? Who could see and consider these things and not feel himself to be standing on ground destined soon to be pulsing with new life, soon to know the master hand of the white man, soon to become an active factor in the world's work, to know the idle and thriftless regime of the red man no longer, but to become a producer, a power on the side of progress, and to furnish homes for future thousands?

The road north of the Peace River, from Peace River Landing to Fort St. John, was made by and under the supervision of the Northwest Mounted Police in 1898. It has seen little use, however, since the Klondike days, as most of the traffic is by water; yet so level is the country, and so free from natural disadvantages, that our party of eleven, with two freight wagons, two buckboards, and three saddle horses, made the 220 miles very easily in seven and a half days, leaving Peace River Landing on July 29th in the evening, and reaching Fort St. John, August 5th, at noon. Remember that between those two points we saw only one house, and that belonging to an Indian, and that nowhere on this road was there a visible sign of a wagon ever having travelled it before—then you may know that this is *not* a country of dense forests and dismal swamps as some writers of psuedo dramatic newspaper articles of recent date would have us believe.

About forty miles from Fort St. John we crossed several small stretches of muskeg, aggregating in all less than a half-mile in width. Crossing the North Pine River, eight miles from St. John, we were obliged to descend 1,000 feet to get to the level of the river, which we forded, then a steep climb of an equal distance on the other side to reach the level again. With these two exceptions the greater part of this 220-mile stretch of road is over gently rolling prairie, dotted with clumps aspen and willows. Along the streams, of which there are quite a number flowing into the Peace, there is generally a narrow belt of timber. The Clearwater hills are also timbered, and the soil quite sandy. Aside from this, one need experience no difficulty in beginning to farm at once nearly any place.

Coming into Fort St. John we descend again to the level of the river, where we find a pretty little valley, not over one square mile in extent, with the hills to the north and west rising a sheer 1,000 feet. No farming has been done here as yet, for there is no one here to do it. The white population at present consists of a priest and three or four men in the employ of the trading companies. These people all have as fine gardens as

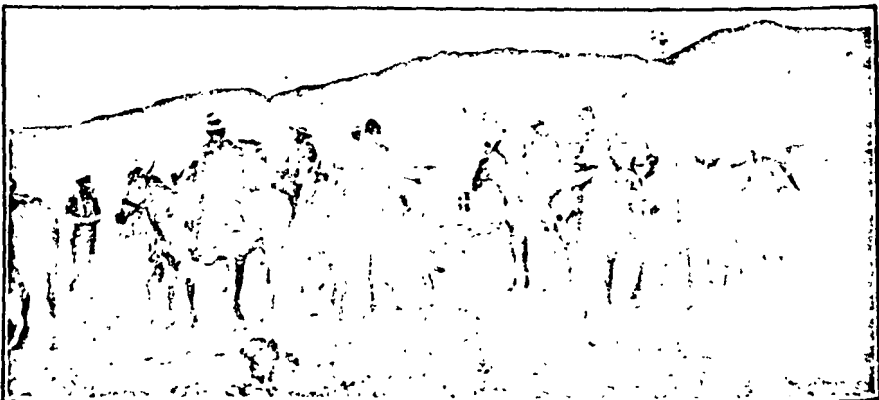
one could wish to see. On the 6th August I had potatoes of good size and quality out of the garden at the mission.

One can always find quite a number of Indians camped here and every day sees a bunch come riding in after supplies. They spend the long summer days roaming the wilds to the



Fort St. John, B. C.

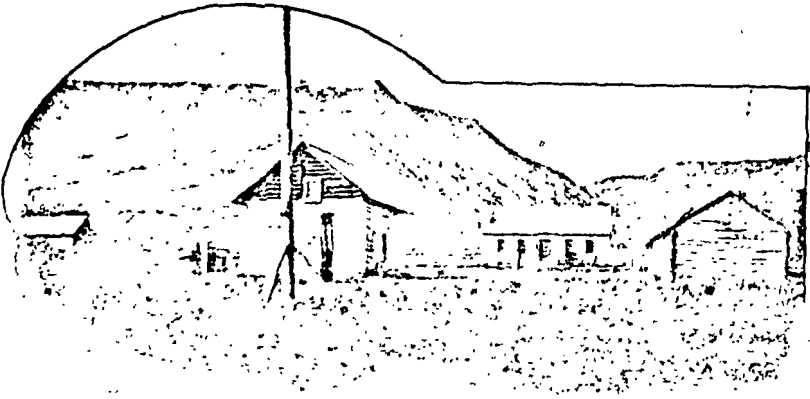
north and to the south of the river, hunting moose and bear, whose meat they smoke and dry for winter use, when bre'r b'ar is taking his long nap and the moose is not in the best of condition for meat. The Indian likes lots of fat and wisely does most of his killing at the season when most is to be found. The traveller will see many deserted Indian camps where kills have been made, the meat smoked and dried, and that in excess of immediate needs packed away and hung up in birch-bark baskets to be collected later by the squaws and brought into the winter camp. A poor hunter it is who does not get a good supply prepared in this way. He eats, too, the flesh of nearly all the fur-bearing animals which he traps during the winter; lynx, of which there are a great number all through this country, being considered a delicacy. So, winter or summer, the Indian never lacks for fresh meat, nor does he lack for anything his childish fancy may crave which can be bought at the trading posts, for this is a land of opportunity for the child



Indians coming into Fort St. John to trade

of nature as well as for the child of civilization. Every year is a prosperous year for him, here; for a poor hunter indeed is he if he cannot catch \$500 worth of fur in a winter. Many run over the \$1,000 mark, and some think \$1,500 not an extraordinary winter's catch. One may live well on \$500 a year where there is no rent to pay, no fuel to buy, nor water, nor light, nor dressmakers' bills.

A good white hunter, of whom always a few find their way into the Last West for the winter's trapping, can easily beat the Indian at his own game. Many such bring in enough fur in the spring to keep them in comfort and idleness till the trapping season opens again. And it takes money to keep a trapper in idleness. A trapper of many year's experience in



Hudson's Bay Post, Fort St. John

Alaska, who is located this winter at Moberly Lake, twenty-five miles south of Hudson's Hope, told me that it would be a poor trapper indeed who could not average \$1,000 per winter, at the very least, anywhere in the Peace River country. What better can a young man of energy, anxious to carve a home for himself, ask for than this? \$300 will outfit him for a winter's trapping; he can homestead 160 acres of as fine land as lies outdoors, invest the proceeds of his winter's work in stock and machinery, and by the time the country becomes settled to such an extent as to drive the fur-bearing animals back into the mountains or the barren lands of the far-north, he should have his farm well under cultivation.

GRANDE PRAIRIE

Of the large tracts of open prairie in this new land of promise the most noted are, the Grande Prairie, the Spirit River Prairie, and the Pouce Coupe Prairie. Grande Prairie leads in size with approximately 3,600 square miles. The soil is a deep black loam, ranging from three to six feet in depth and very rich, but not as suitable to the northern climate as a lighter and more sandy soil, as crops will not grow as fast nor mature so quickly in the heavy soil. There are a half-dozen white settlers near the trading posts, but farming has not been tried on a scale sufficient to test either soil or climate.

Timber fires, started by some careless member of a surveying party, swept down from the West, left the timber behind, and made a clean sweep of Grande Prairie last summer. No lives were lost, but a few buildings were burned, and the intense heat seemed to dry the very moisture in the air, for no rain fell during the summer, with the result that the few little crops planted by settlers in Grande Prairie last year were



A Timber Fire west of Grande Prairie

not of the best. Good crops have, however, been grown in the two or three previous years in which they have been sown, and the settlers have unbounded confidence in the future of the district as a farming country.

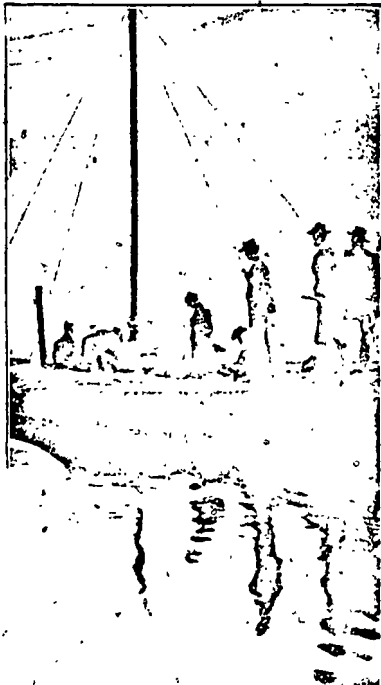
The chinook winds seldom strike Grande Prairie, but judging from the fact that horses range there all winter and keep in good condition, and from the reports of fur traders who have spent many years there, the climate is very similar to that of Edmonton. Although the temperature sometimes falls quite low the dry atmosphere and bright sunshine make the cold less noticeable than in many places a thousand miles or more to the south. The Smoky, Wapiti, and a number of smaller rivers give

excellent drainage, and in connection with numerous large fresh-water lakes, furnish a permanent water supply.

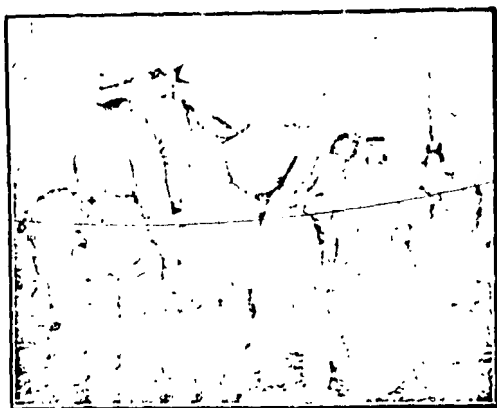
A large amount of fur is caught here during the winter, some of which is traded or sold at the trading posts at Saskatoon Lake and some taken to the Peace River or Slave Lake posts. Here, as elsewhere in the Peace River Country, the early settler can profitably employ his time during the winter months in trapping.

Quite a large number of travellers, representatives of land or colonization companies, and a few intending settlers found their way to Grande Prairie last summer and were almost invariably well satisfied with the appearance of the soil and climate, and prophesied a great influx of settlers as soon as its resources become more widely known.

For my part, I believe Grande Prairie to be less favored by nature in the matter of soil and climate than any of the noted prairies in the Peace River country, as it does not seem to get as plentiful a rainfall as do other prairies to the west, north and east, and again it is a well-established fact that crops do not mature so quickly in the heavy black soil, such as is found here, as they do in a lighter soil. Still as before stated, the tests made thus far have produced very favorable results, and I believe that Grande Prairie will eventually become a great farming country.



Sunset on the Peace River



Packing up

POUCE COUPE PRAIRIE

The Pouce Coupe is second in size to Grande Prairie, there being fully 1000 square miles ready for the plow. This is the paradise of the Northwest, its location being such that the chinook winds come down through three mountain passes and sweep across it like a warm ocean current in an arctic sea, warming everything they touch and melting the winter's snow sometimes as quickly as it falls, and always keeping it down so that horses experience absolutely no difficulty in feeding all winter on the native grasses. The Indians have wintered horses here for years without a spear of hay, and last year a Frenchman, of the name of Trambly, took his pack train of twenty-five horses—formerly used by an exploration party with headquarters opposite Fort St. John—to the Pouce Coupe for the winter, and no hay had he nor did he want any.

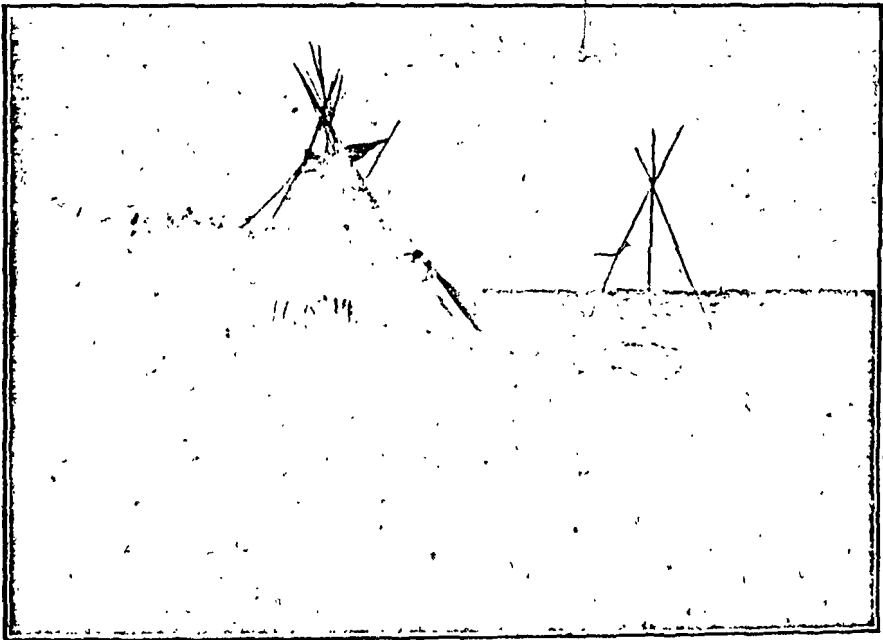
Not only is this the favorite feeding ground for horses but the wild animals as well. Rabbits are more plentiful here than elsewhere; lynx follow the rabbits, of which they seem to be extremely fond; foxes, too, are partial to rabbits; but 'Br'er B'ar' finds plenty of food here to suit his taste without troubling about rabbits. In the spring he varies his diet between ants and trout and the tender young pea-vine, but with summer comes the berries, saskatoons, strawberries, cherries of several varieties, and best of all, for him, willow-berries. Here his friends and relatives come from far and wide to fatten up for the winter's sleep. Even when the berries are gone on the deep-cut banks of the Peace, there is always plenty on the Pouce Coupe. In September last, a gentleman of my acquaintance saw nine bear in two days on the Pouce Coupe prairie, while in a 250-mile trip down the Peace I saw never a one, though during the berry season the passengers on the steamboat "Peace River" saw twenty-six from the boat while enroute from Peace River Landing to Fort St. John. All of which goes

to prove that the seasons are longer on the Pouce Coupe even than in the valley of the Peace.

The saskatoon, the most prolific and palatable berry native to the country, has never, within the memory of the oldest Indian, missed a bountiful crop each year. The same cannot be said of any other section of the country, the late spring frosts catching them occasionally, although it happens very rarely, in the river bottoms. No farming has as yet been done on the Pouce Coupe, as the first bona fide settlers went in last fall; but the natural vegetation not only shows the soil to be very rich but the climate, as well, to be equal to that of southern Alberta. The blue-joint, pea-vine and vetches would hide a horse, in August, while the berries and plants most sensitive to frost showed no sign of damage in mid-September.

The surface of this prairie is gently rolling, with little bush-grown knolls dotted here and there, evidently the remnants of a larger forest growth in the days long past, before the white man with his "fire stick" became the cause of the terrible fires which year after year swept this country for miles and miles and destroyed the original growth of forest, traces of which can still be found in many places.

There are a few small lakes and numerous creeks of fair size with a good flow of cold clear water, running through this prairie. Good indications of coal have been found, timber for fuel and building purposes is near at hand, game is plentiful, the vegetation proves the soil to be fertile, and the climate favorable. In fact nothing is lacking to make the development of this vast prairie easy for the early settlers.





Dunvegan

SPIRIT RIVER PRAIRIE

This fertile prairie contains an area of about 900 square miles, lying along the banks of the river from which it takes its name. The soil is a slightly sandy loam over a clay sub-soil and exceedingly fertile. A few settlers have located along the river and others are trekking that way. Here, as elsewhere, building material and fuel are plentiful and the natural water supply adequate to the needs of settlers.

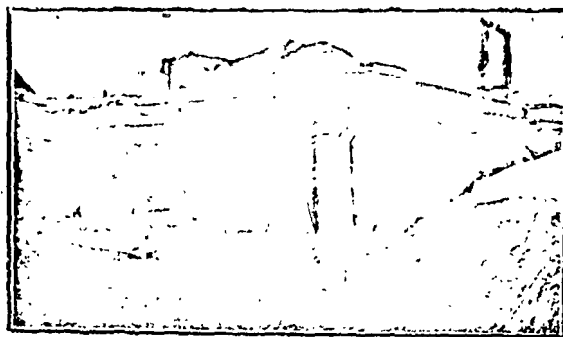
It is next to impossible to get figures on the crops grown here, as farming has necessarily been done only on a small scale as yet; but the crops grown thus far have been highly satisfactory and have never suffered damage by frost. Horses very commonly winter on the prairie and suffer no privation thereby. Considerable trapping is done in and near this section, principally by Indians and breeds, and the fur-harvest each year is a rich one.

This prairie is the most easily accessible of the three most noted prairies in the Peace River country, as it can be reached by trail direct from Slave Lake, 135 miles, or from Dunvegan,



A Homestead on Spirit River

distant only ten miles. As a matter of fact there is practically no natural dividing line between Grande Prairie and the Spirit River prairie, the country south from Dunvegan for 120 miles being alternating patches of prairie and aspen and willow coppice, nearly every acre of which can be put under the plow. Although reports show last winter to have been the most severe experienced since the early eighties, some settlers who came into Edmonton in January from Grande and Spirit River prairies



Hand-made Threshing Machine

and from Peace River Landing said that horses on the range were doing well, and but for the depredations of wolves, owing to exceptionally deep snow and a scarcity of rabbits and other small animals upon which they feed, there would be no loss of stock other than the usual percentage from perfectly natural causes. These wolves do not come near the settlements but confine their operations to the bunches of horses which are roaming the ranges. The loss has thus far been very light, however, and the settlers anticipate no serious trouble from this source.



Indian Camp above Dunvegan



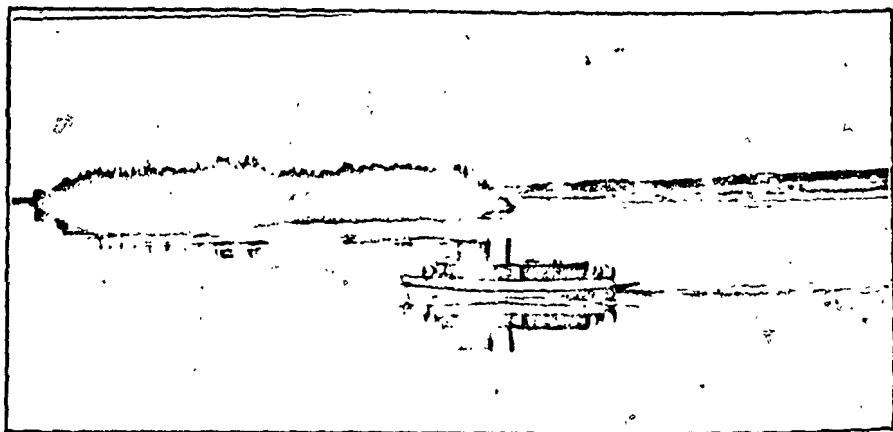
Waiting for the Steamboat, Fort Vermilion

THE VERMILION DISTRICT

Fort Vermilion is one of the most important posts on the Peace River as it is the most northerly post in the Last West where agriculture as a business is successfully and profitably carried on.

Situated on the south bank about sixty feet above the river, which is here nearly a mile wide, in the heart of a gently rolling alternating prairie and bush-grown country extending back from thirty to one hundred miles, down river a hundred miles, and up river on the west side nearly three hundred miles—an area larger than seven-millioned Belgium—with a population of a dozen families of white settlers and, perhaps, five hundred Indians and Breeds, it is distinctly a frontier city in the embryonic stage. There are in the Vermilion district alone possibilities for development which should make Vermilion a city in the next decade.

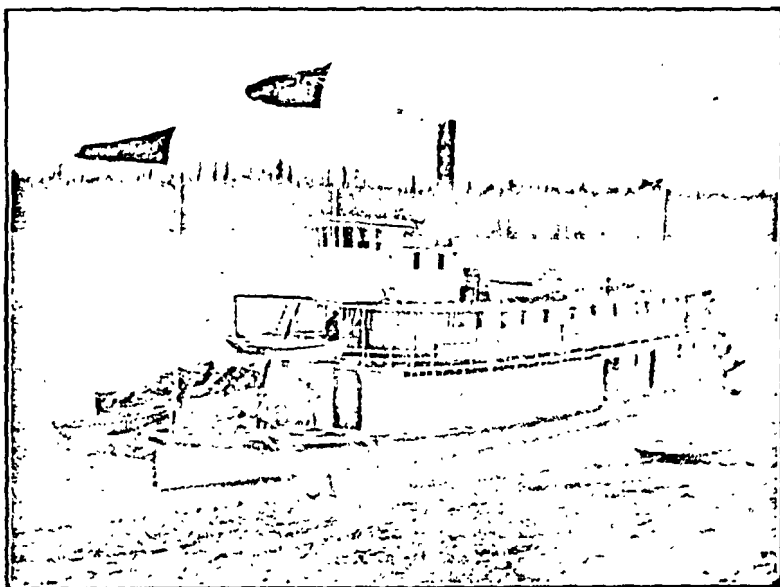
Wheat has been grown successfully here for upwards of thirty years, as have also oats, barley, and vegetables. Thirty thousand bushels of wheat were grown here in 1906, on a total of not more than 1000 acres seeded. Every bushel is ground



R. C. Mission Steamer coming into Fort Vermilion

into flour, the output being just about sufficient to supply the local demand.

It is the intention of the H. B. Co. to eventually supply the trading posts of the Far North with flour from their mill here, a mill which would today bring credit to any railroad town, equipped as it is with up-to-date machinery and its own electric lighting plant. They also have a fine saw mill which supplies lumber for the settlement, the raw material being easily obtainable from the islands and banks of the Peace, a short distance above the fort. The lumber for the H. B. Co's fine boat, "Peace River," was all manufactured here; likewise was



The Steamer Peace River, Landing at Fort Vermilion

the boat built here, only the boiler and machinery being brought in from Edmonton.

One of the finest farms in the Vermilion district is owned and operated by Sheridan Lawrence, who has lived here twenty years. His brother, Fred, to whom I am indebted for most of my information about crops in the district, is authority for the following statements:

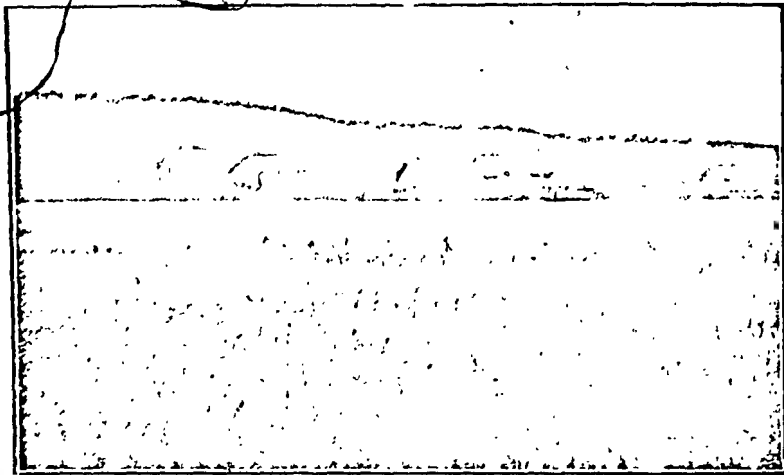
"Wheat has matured here in 86 days."

"Cereal crops are sown late in April and early in May, and harvest begins early in August."

"Tomatoes planted in the open garden in the middle of May, have ripened on the vines, and we always have new potatoes in July."

"I believe winter wheat to be the future crop of the Peace River country. The ground stays frozen and is covered by a good fall of snow, which prevents the heaving so disastrous to winter wheat in some places, and assures sufficient moisture

to give it a good start in the spring. I have seen winter wheat of fine quality ripened by the eighteenth of July, fully two weeks earlier than spring wheat can be matured, this in itself would be a great advantage as it would not only minimize the



Sheridan Lawrence's Ranch

danger from early autumn frosts, but would give the farmer more time in which to care for his crop and prepare for winter."

"The summers at Vermilion are beautiful. In June and July one can read a newspaper at midnight without the aid of artificial light. There is over twenty hours of sunshine, and after sunset there is no darkness, the light gradually fading to twilight, then growing stronger and stronger till the sun again appears. It is this which matures the crops so quickly."



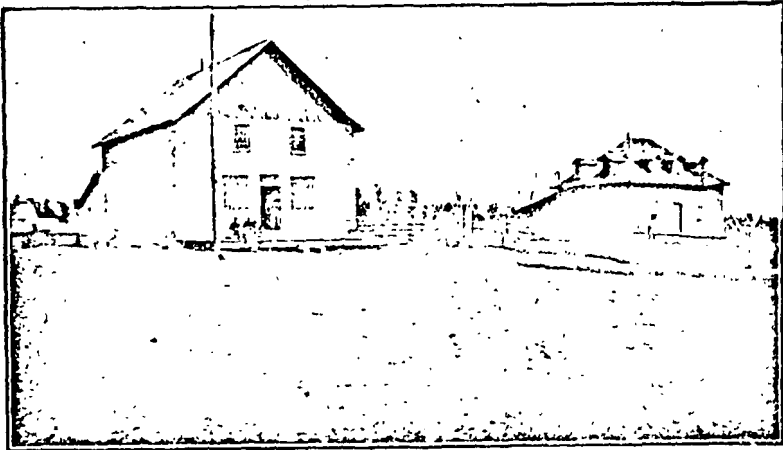
An Indian Trading—Revillon's Store, Fort Vermilion

"The winters, though long, are not severe. There is rarely more than two feet of snow and very seldom a disagreeable wind. The air is crisp and dry, so that one does not

feel the cold so much at thirty below as he would in the Great Lakes country at zero."

The maximum average temperature at Fort Vermilion for the month of December, 1906, was 6.29, the minimum, .25, according to Rev. W. S. Williams, Observer for the Government at St. Luke's Mission, Fort Vermilion. Several old-timers from the north whom I met in Edmonton during the past winter proclaim it to have been the most severe winter experienced there in years, as it was throughout all Western Canada. And they, one and all, say they like the climate and have no desire to change. That the weather cannot be as severe as the uninitiated might think, we have substantial proof in the fact that the settlement supplies its own beef and pork at prices lower than prevail at Edmonton, and horses, of which there are a goodly number in the settlement, can be bought as cheaply as in a railroad town.

Let us investigate more closely the nature of the country here, and we may find a good reason for the mildness—considering the latitude—of the climate. As we all know, aside from air and ocean currents, climate is a matter of latitude and altitude. It is in low altitude that the Vermilion district evens up to some extent on its high latitude. Whereas Edmonton is 2400 feet above sea level, Vermilion, though five hundred miles



Revillon's Trading Post, Fort Vermilion

north, is only 1,050 feet above the sea. This extremely low altitude must influence the temperature to a great extent. Then again, although Vermilion knows not the chinook, as do Calgary and Edmonton, its relative position in regard to the mountains and to the ocean is much the same, and the chinook wind, which finds its way through the various mountain passes, making such a warm welcome for itself in those and many other places, clear on up to Peace River Landing, retains enough of its warmth to temper the climate to

some extent all through the Peace River country, clear down to and beyond Vermillion.

Both the Catholic and English Church have missions and schools here which are self-supporting and doing a grand work. It is due principally to their efforts that nearly all the 'Breeds and Indians in the settlement can speak English, and quite a number can read and write, in fact, there are now very few children of school age, regardless of race or color, but receive a fair education and a religious training.

With education has come to ^{half} Breed and Indian alike the desire—it can hardly be called ambition as yet—for a broader life, in the seeking of which he must naturally copy after the white man, with the result that a goodly percentage of them have taken land and are cultivating it with fairly good success. They build good comfortable houses, buy the best machinery they can get, and most of them take pride in the results obtained. That they are not up-to-date agriculturists is to be expected, but that they are learning rapidly no one can deny. True to the old instincts they one and all trap in the winter, at which they are naturally more successful than at farming, and by combining the two they keep quite prosperous.

This settlement is, as are all others in the Last West, under the protection of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, but very rarely indeed are their services really needed, as crime is almost unknown. One may leave his house unlocked with no fear of burglars; likewise may the traveller leave part of his grub-stake "cached" beside the trail out of the reach of dogs or other animals and be sure of finding it untouched upon his return, unless another traveller, fresh from the centres of higher civilization, happens along, in which case his chances in that line will not be quite so good.

Farming has not been tried, back farther than six or seven miles from the river here, but the nature of the country is practically the same for upwards of seventy miles, so there is no logical reason why as favorable results may not be obtained in one place as in another.

In the 300 mile stretch above Vermilion, which I have described as "alternating, undulating prairie and bush-grown country," there are a few small ranges of hills and some quite rough country close to the river, but from the best information obtainable I judge that at least seventy-five per cent of this immense area is suitable for farming and stock-raising.



The Rapids in Lesser Slave River test one's skill and knowledge of Boat Repairing

WATER-WAY TO BE IMPROVED

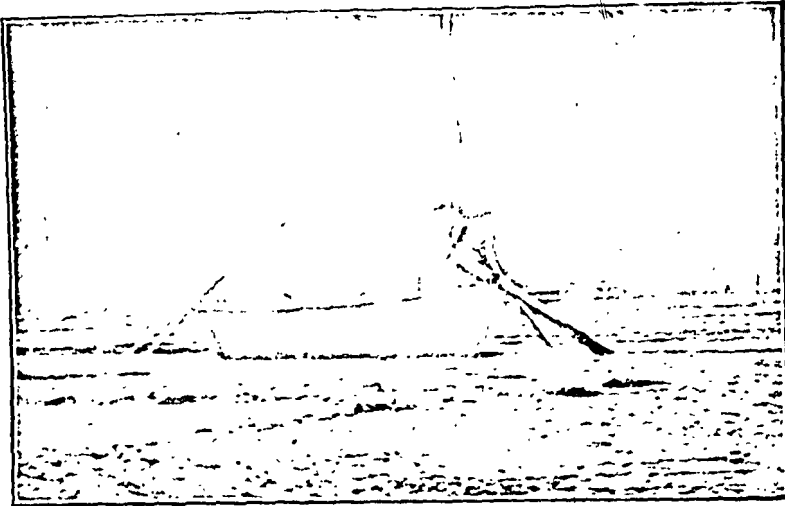
Through the instrumentality of Capt. Barber who built the Northern Light at Athabasca Landing in the spring of 1906, the Ottawa government has made an appropriation of \$35,000 to be used in building wing-dams in the rapids of Lesser Slave river and thus make it navigable for steamboats. Twenty-two miles of the river's sixty-five miles in length is a succession of rapids, the balance being a fine body of water for navigation.

Capt. Barber who has charge of the work, which is now in progress, expects by building wing-dams in some of the worst of the rapids to raise the water sufficiently to obliterate the rest, and thus by the aid of a steam capstan to pull steamboats up through the swiftest places, he anticipates no trouble in successfully navigating the river with steamboats of forty or fifty tons burden in this way.

This work will be pushed with the greatest possible speed this summer and those in charge are fully confident that the opening of navigation in the spring of 1908 will see the work completed. This is a move in the right direction and goes to show that the government officials are beginning to realize the importance of this new industrial field and mean to assist in its development.

In the meantime the Peace river and Lesser Slave lake freight will be handled by the Northern Transportation Company, which company came to pass through a combination of forces between Jim Woods with the steamer Midnight Sun and Capt.

Barber with the Northern Light. It is the intention of this company to use the Midnight Sun between Athabasca Landing and Grand Rapids 165 miles below the Landing, and between Athabasca Landing and the rapids on Lesser Slave river 75 miles above the Landing, when the freight will be transferred to scows and York boats or portaged by teams to the top of the



Peace River freight enroute, in the rapids, Lesser Slave River

rapids where it will be taken aboard the Northern Light and carried on by that boat to the upper end of Lesser Slave lake. From there on the Peace river freight will be handled as of old, that is, a ninety-mile portage by wagon road to Peace river Landing, then taken up or down river from there by steamer.

This arrangement will facilitate the handling of freight into that country and give the residents thereof a better service than has been theirs in the past, likewise will it add materially to the comfort of travellers visiting the country this summer. Those contemplating such a trip can get time table, freight and passenger tariff etc. at the Alberta Agencies, Ltd., Edmonton, after the opening of navigation, probably May first.



Wind-bound in the Narrows, Lesser Slave Lake

THE INDIAN OF TODAY

The history of the Indian of the Last West is not one of blood, pillage and destruction but the peaceful if pathetic story of a gradual surrender to the inevitable; obedience to the stronger will and stronger purpose of the white man.

As the white man encroaches more and more upon his game preserves, with his fur-trade and farm implements; instead of antagonizing him and spilling innocent blood, as did numerous other members of his race in the days of the settlement of another Great West of far fame, and of such recent date as to be of the personal knowledge of a generation not yet passed away, the Indian of the Last West copies after the ways of the white-man, and gladly exchanges the results of his prowess in the field or with the trap and snare, for the tea and bacon and flour and tobacco and trinkets of the usurper, and he does it peacefully, without coercion, because he has been gradually educated up to it, by precept and by example, and by tactful handling; always the iron hand in the velvet glove, the hand of the Hudson's Bay Company, which was practically the governing power of the North-West Territories until a score and a half years ago.

Of the great works of this Anciente and Honourable Companie in the New World this has been the greatest. Even though its object was self-aggrandizement the results of its Indian policy have been proven to be more satisfactory than have been achieved by any other institution or by any Government.

That the Missionaries have played no small part in this work no one, not even the agents of this great company themselves would attempt, or care, to deny. Today the Missionaries' influence may be greater than the combined influence of the Hudson's Bay Co., and the Government, but it was the H. B. Co's agents that first taught the Indian that the white man's mission among them was one of peace.

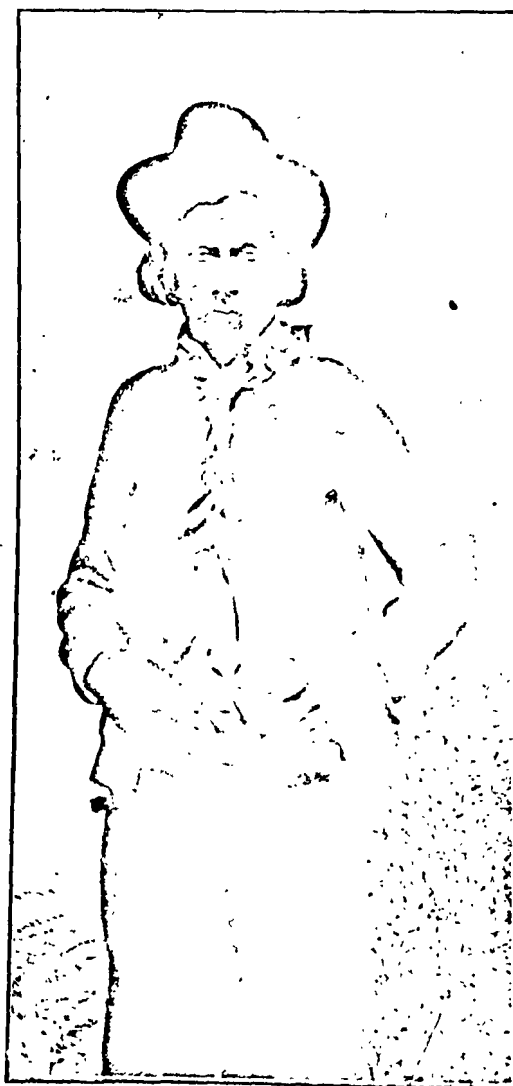
Their methods were the simplest and best, they did it simply by implanting in the bosom of the untutored savage an imperishable desire for the white man's goods, especially his tea, tobacco and fire-arms. Having sown the seed, they spared no pains to cultivate it, and thus they were among the first exponents of advanced methods in retail business, methods which surely first came into popular favor in the Nineteenth Century, the first principle of which is—make your customer your friend.

By the practical application of this principle, the agents of this Anciente and Honourable Companie proceeded to make





Before the White Man came



A typical Indian of to-day

dividends, thus in serving their own ends likewise did they serve those who are to follow, and perhaps unwittingly, make their pathway pleasant and free from danger. For the Indian of the Last West, though not effusively friendly is never hostile to the stranger within his domains.

On a day in August 1906, I visited an Indian camp on the shore of Moberly Lake—a beautiful lake, nestling in the foothills of the Rockies—there were five families camped here, fishing and hunting. Stretched on poles beside each tepee was one or more bear-skins, trophies of late prowess in the hunt, drying in the sun, and also on poles in front of the teepees were great quantities of moose and bear meat being cured by means of heat and smoke—a process known to frontiersmen as “jerking”—for future use. The squaws were of course doing all the work, while their lords and masters sat in a circle around a



Beautiful Moberly River

small camp fire and smoked and regaled each other with very vivid recitals as to how those selfsame bear and moose had been vanquished. Several bright-eyed papooses were playing about and withal the picture presented, with its wild setting—the beautiful little lake with no sign of boat or other evidence of the white man's handiwork, the rugged foot hills to the rear growing higher and more rugged toward the mighty Rockies on the west, and, back by the trail I had just come, 120 miles to Fort St. John and white man's habitation—might have made a fitting illustration for one of the Leatherstocking Tales, but for the fact that the works of the white man were everywhere in evidence.

To begin with, one and all were dressed in the garb of civilization. The squaws in expensive Scotch plaids and woolens, velvets and silks of bright and various hues being added for effect. The braves in serges and worsteds bearing the unmistakable marks of the “ready-made,” and the inevitable “Stetson” hat. The papooses, replicas of the parents unless perhaps on a less elaborate scale. Lying beside the camp fire

was an Hudson's Bay ax. A Winchester 30-30 calibre carbine leaned against a pole upon which a full cartridge belt hung, lying near were a number of pack saddles and a typical "cow-boy" saddle stamped "Great West." Upon entering the nearest teepee, in response to an invitation to dinner, I saw no less than four pair of Hudson's Bay four-point blankets strung around the central fire where they had been used the night before as bedding. For dinner, were served, bear meat, fried in American lard, bannock, made from flour and baking-powder and baked in a frying-pan in front of the camp fire, English breakfast tea, first quality, with sugar and condensed milk, butter from an Ontario creamery. If the man who made that butter is still living, I bear him no ill-will, for it was probably all right when it left his hands, but I'll bet his hair has long since turned grey. I made a fair meal, however, without butter, as they had, in addition to native raspberries, Crosse & Blackwell's best quality jam. The food was fairly well cooked and the

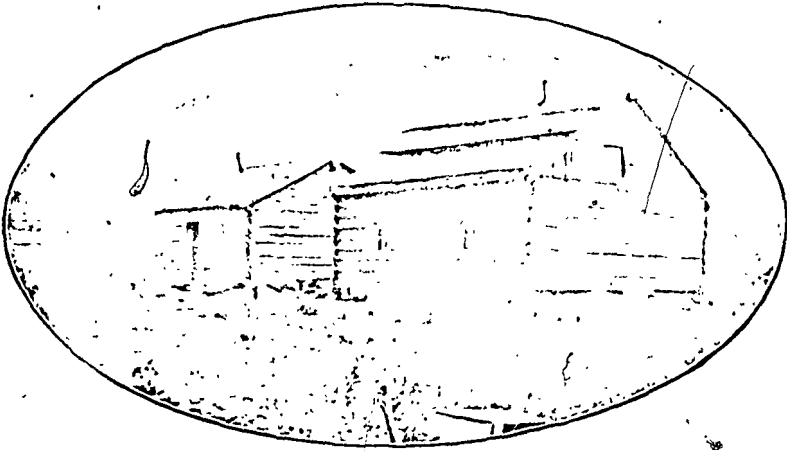


Beaver Indians with Trophies of the Hunt

dishes, consisting of granite plates and cups and saucers, ordinary kitchen knives and forks, and granite cooking utensils were clean. I have, in fact, fared worse in restaurants.

We sat on bark and skins on the ground, forming a circle around the camp fire, over which were suspended the kettles containing the food, which the squaw served to us directly in our plates, which we held in our laps or placed on the ground in front of us. The children, of which there were five in this family, helped to form the circle and were served by mother or father alike; never a word did one of them utter but kept their bright, beaded eyes riveted upon me, more in curiosity than fear. Bright and healthy looking were they, and as full of promise in their parents' eyes as the most pampered child of luxury, to his. If you would win the parents regard, stint not your attention to these bright-eyed youngsters, but bend every energy to please them, and if you are successful, the friendship of

mother and father is yours, and in that far country the friendship of an Indian is not to be despised.



Revillon's Trading Post, Fort St. John

After dinner mine host and myself repaired to the general camp fire outside the teepee, where we were soon joined by the braves from the other teepees; my tobacco was passed around, pipes were filled and lighted, and six columns of pungent blue smoke sent drifting skyward before a word was spoken. He who had been my host at dinner was the one to break the silence, and by right of his superior knowledge of English, continued to do most of the talking for his companions. His conversation was naturally of the things of closest interest to himself, such as the coming of the freight boats with a fresh cargo of provisions, guns and ammunition, the price of furs in Edmonton and the comparative merits of the rival companies engaged in the fur trade. He knew every white man by name who had travelled up or down the Peace River that summer, and surprised me by telling me with whom and in what manner I had travelled into Fort St. John from Lesser Slave Lake. He told me later news of the movements of my fellow travellers whom I had left at Fort St. John, than I had from personal knowledge, although I had just come from there. My pace had been regulated to that of my pack horse—an average of twenty miles per day—whereas he had ridden an equal distance, 120 miles, by a slightly different route in two days, having just returned to his camp the evening before.

Wishing to get some of the moose-meat being smoked before the teepee, I adopted the method of the fur trader and presented mine hosts' squaw with a pound of tea, casting meanwhile longing glances at the coveted meat. My diplomacy was rewarded by a quantity of the choicest meat, sufficient for several days rations. The Indian is an extreme socialist and believes in sharing the good things which fall to his lot with his companions, relatives and friends. By showing a disposition to do the same, the white man can, by making the first advances in the shape of small presents of tea or tobacco or some fancy trinket, take

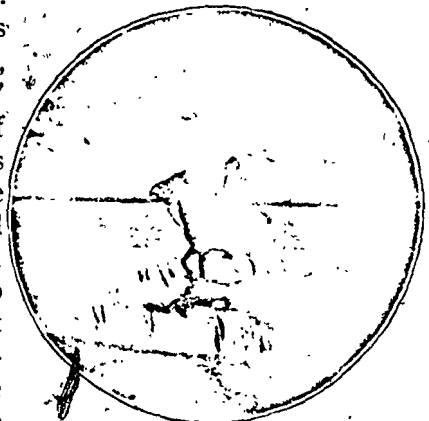
advantage of this characteristic and obtain many favors thereby. Naturally, none know better than the fur-trader the idiosyncracies of the Indian character, and none know better than he how to play upon them to his own personal gain. This, I



A bunch of Fur Traders

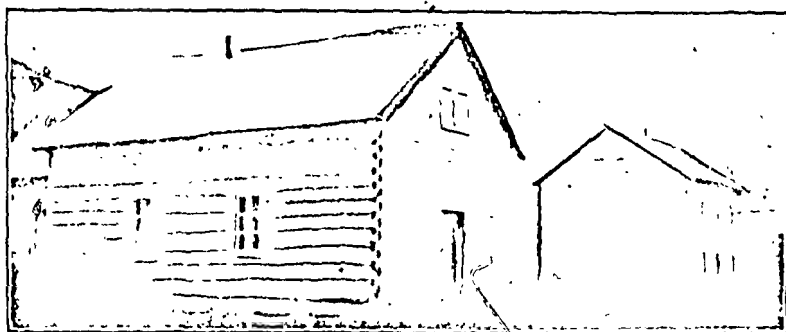
believe is the secret of the Hudson's Bay Company's unparalleled success in dealing with the Indians. Its method is to adapt its policy to the peculiar characteristics of the Indian, and its experience has proven fact to be a much stronger asset than force when dealing with them. Although, in the old days, when the West was young and the remote trading posts knew not the protection of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, the Hudson's Bay Company's factors were invested with supreme authority in the making and enforcing of laws, governing both white and red man in the territory over which they exercised business dominion. Rarely, very rarely indeed did one of them abuse the power thus vested in him, except perhaps in the case of certain business competitors, the history of which has no bearing upon this article.

Thus, by being honest in his dealings, and just in his conduct, did "ye olde time fur-trader" win the confidence and friendship of the Indian. By continuance of this policy and by gradually educating the Indians in the use of manufactured goods, have his successors maintained those friendly relations and built up a great business, and, more important still, paved the way for friendly relations between the Indians and the Settlers, who follow close upon the trail blazed by those hardy pioneers.

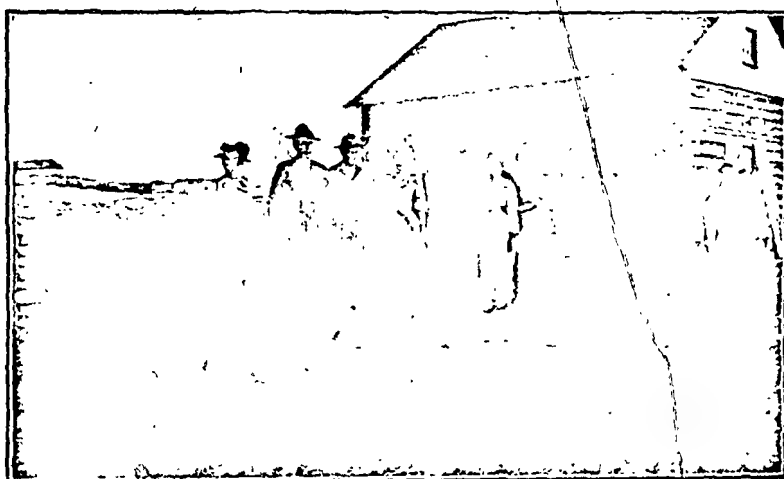


Mounted Policeman on Patrol

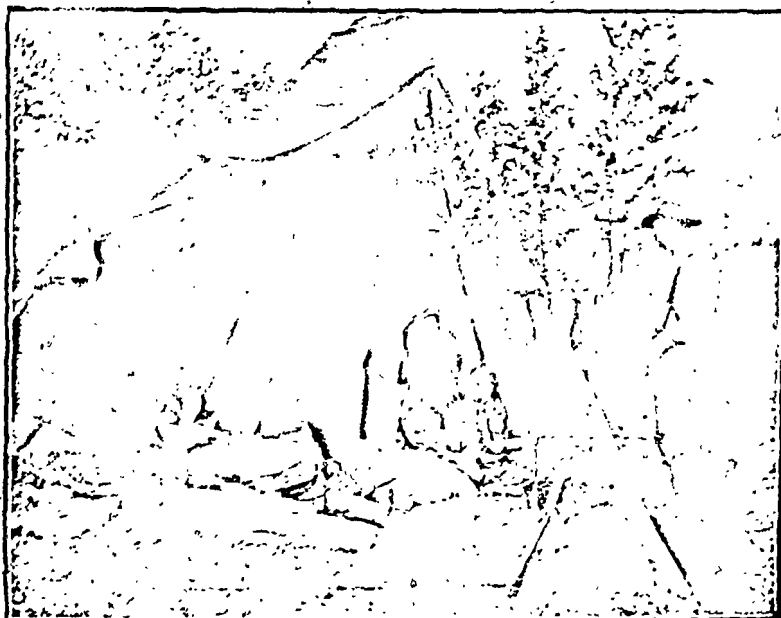
That the fur-trader has known more intimate relations with the Indians than were absolutely essential to the prosecution



R. C. Mission, Dunvegan



Indian Wedding Party, Lesser Slave Lake



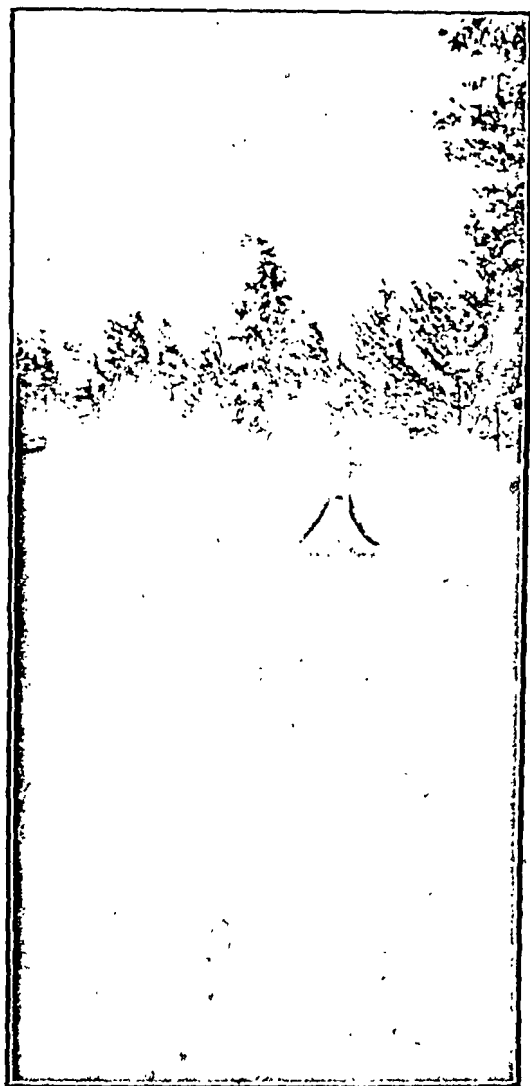
A Squaw-man and his family, in their summer home

of his business is evidenced by the fact that fully 75 per cent of the natives in the Last West, classed as Indians, are, in reality, Breeds of varying degrees of white and red blood. Thanks to the hard and fast rules laid down by the "anciente and honourable Companie trading into Hudson's Bay," and its aides and abettors, the Missionaries, by far the greater percentage of the Breeds in the Last West are not illegitimate, as the uninitiated might think. On the contrary, they are the offspring from marriage relations, governed and controlled by laws more stringent than are enforced with you and me. During my travels in the Last West I observed very closely the relations existing between white men, married to squaws, and their wives, and I must say that they appeared to be contented and happy. Repeated inquiry failed to bring to light but one case of desertion by a white man so married. That the white man married to an Indian woman must inevitably degenerate to her level is a matter of common knowledge, but that the offspring of such a union is not a blight upon the fair fame of our country, as would have been the offspring of indiscriminate liaisons between white men and native women, seems to me ample justification of the marriage laws. Whether it be, that the degeneracy of the father is responsible, is foreign to the purpose of this article to contend or deny, but certain it is that, in disposition, the Breed adheres closely to the maternal type and seldom shows traces of white blood other than by a fairer skin and a stronger propensity for doing anything but that which is manly and honorable, than characterizes the full-blood Indian, who is very rarely guilty of lying, stealing, and like petty offences, which same cannot be said for the Breed.

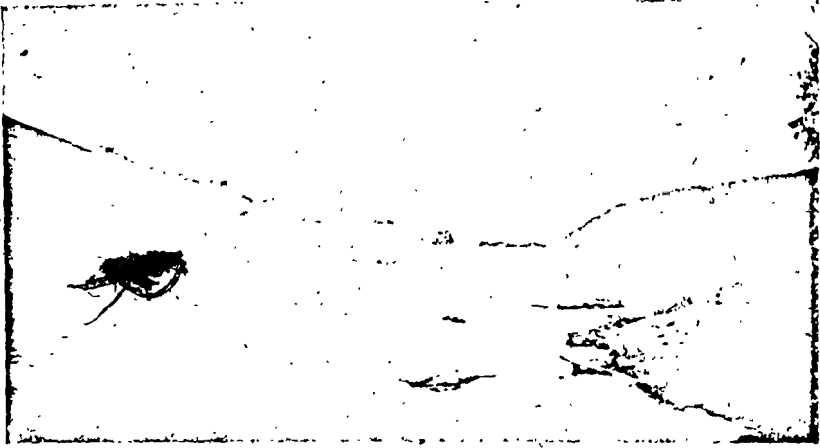
Educate him as you will, and still the ear of the Breed is ever attuned to the call of the wild, and he will go back to his teepee at the first opportunity. Having, for the time, satiated his lust for the hunt, or having exhausted his credit at the trading post, he will, when hard pushed, do a good day's work, but the eye of the boss must be ever upon him, for he knows no responsibility, and has no knowledge of the value of time or opportunity. True, we find occasionally a small colony of Breeds who emulate the white man and build homes for themselves, take land and cultivate it with fairly good results, but even this class drop their farm implements for the gun as the favorable season for hunting comes, and at the approach of winter the farm is abandoned, a load of supplies purchased at the nearest trading post, and pilgrimage made to some region noted for its fur, where the whole family engage in trapping during the winter. Considering that a good trapper can catch \$500 to \$1,000 worth of fur in a winter, there is, of course, some justification for this.

The Breeds have, as a rule, larger families than the Indians, and they also appear to thrive better, from a physical standpoint, than do the Indians under the rule of the white man, for

here, as in other countries, the Indians cannot stand the changed condition, and—shall I say disease?—which the white men bring, as a result the death rate is in excess of the birth rate among them, whereas the Breeds, by reason of their white blood, do not suffer so heavily from diseases fatal to the Indians, and are, perhaps, somewhat more adaptable, hence, though they stick to the mode of life of their dusky ancestors, the blood of the white man in their veins better fits them for existence under his reign.



"No further seek his merits to disclose
Or drag his frailties from their dread abode
There, they alike in trembling hope repose
The bosom of his Father and his God."



OTHER PRAIRIES

Because I have described certain "prairies," do not think that the rest of the Last West is timber-covered, or mountainous or of a nature unfit for cultivation, for such is not the case. Nor are the few named the only prairies. As a matter of fact, the Peace River country is practically a prairie country. North of the river between Peace River Landing and the mountains to the west is a 300 mile stretch of prairie, broken only by the Clearwater Hills and an occasional patch of aspen or spruce and jack-pine. How far north this kind of country extends I could not learn, but from reports of Indians I judge that, with the exception of occasional swamps and ranges of hills, it extends on at least three hundred miles. The climate and soil have never been thoroughly tested by cultivation anywhere on this great expanse of country until Vermilion is reached, 300 miles north of Peace River Landing. Here wheat, oats, and barley, and all kinds of vegetables, have been grown in abundance for years, and certainly when such a record has been established at Vermilion there is no logical reason why the same cannot be done at any place on the above described prairie. The natural vegetation was everywhere luxuriant when I passed over the road from Peace River Landing to Fort St. John during the last three days of July and the first five in August. I carried no feed of any kind for my saddle horse, which was a cayuse, native to the country, allowing him to pick his living from the rich prairie grasses and pea-vine, an arrangement which suited him as well as it did me, and kept him in first-class condition. There can be no more pleasant country than this to travel through during the long summer days. The heat is never excessive, and the nights are always cool; there is always an

abundance of pure clear water to be found; fuel for the camp fire is never far away; and one need never worry about feed for the horses: so if the party be not too large, and its members

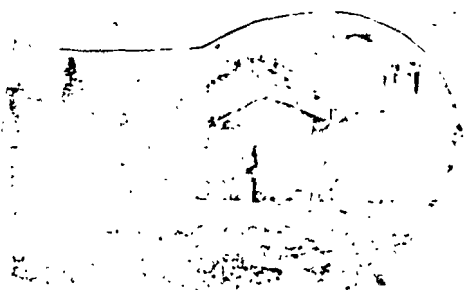


The Pleasures of Camp Life

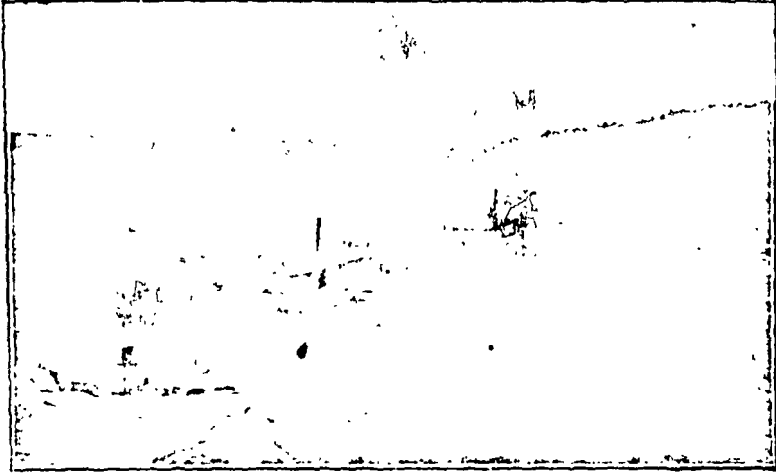
congenial, they should enjoy to the full the pleasures of camp life under the most favorable of conditions.

South of the Peace River there are many fine stretches of fertile prairie in addition to those previously named in this book, where the natural growth is as rank as can be found and the conditions for building material, fuel, and water, just as favorable. To me it seems that a homeseeker going into that country now need question nothing but his own taste, as where he finds a place whose location, lay of land, etc., suits him, there he may locate with a reasonable certainty that if he exercises a fair amount of industry he will have no trouble in making a fine farm and a comfortable home for himself and family in as short a time as the same results could be obtained anywhere in Canada, or in all the world for that matter. One going into a new country must expect to find some drawbacks, and to do

without some of the conveniences and so-called advantages of civilization, but the independence and opportunity for advancement should compensate for any loss of that kind; in fact, the entire Peace River country is so easy of access, and the climatic and other natural conditions so favorable, as to make pioneering a life of pleasure rather than hardship.



A Trapper's Cabin



Steamers Caribou, Eva and Wrigley on the McKenzie River

THE FUTURE

No man can foresee the future of this vast domain any more than he could the development of the West of a decade ago. Marvelous as has been the change in that famous "Wild West" of our neighbors on the South, during the past forty years, where scores of tribes of wild and hostile Indians had to be subdued before the Settler could claim his own—a process which stained the grass of the prairies with the blood of many a brave man and noble woman, and required the maintenance, by the Government, of a number of well equipped army posts—and that too, at a time when the world was a decade less advanced in transportation facilities and the perfection of machinery for tilling the soil: how much more marvelous should be the development of this Last West within the next decade, with trading posts established near the most fertile sections, good roads connecting them, and with railroads building every day at a record breaking pace.

In addition to the ever increasing number of immigrants who each year leave the old world to make their homes in this new land, the United States, with its eighty millions, is becoming too thickly settled for many of her land-hungry adventure-loving sons, who are seeking broader fields of endeavor in each and every line of industry, in which their experience in a country whose natural resources were very similar, has taught them how to achieve practical results in a minimum of time, a knowledge which enables them to outshine all nationalities, except the Canadian himself, in adapting themselves to the conditions of the country and so moulding

those conditions as to adapt them to their needs. With the Canadian and American in the lead, other nationalities will follow in such numbers as to surprise me, not at all, to see every quarter section available for homestead entry, in the Last West taken in five years from to-day, and then the rate of entry would not be as rapid as in the Edmonton district during the year 1906.

No man can prophesy as to the exact date when the iron horse will be first seen on the banks of the Peace, but sufficient for the time is it for us to know that the resources are there to support several railroads, which being the case, this era of railroad building will hardly pass and leave the Peace River country to transport the produce, which in the natural course of things it will soon be producing, in the pioneer manner. Surveys have been made by the Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern, both of which Co's have their work cut out for the next two years in the completion of their trans-continental lines to the Pacific coast, after which they will without doubt turn their attention to the Peace River country. The Canadian Pacific is looking with a jealous eye upon the increasing mileage of these rival roads through this great fertile Western Canada, and may in consequence rise to the occasion and be the first to cross the broad prairies of this best of the Last West. Jim Hill, the world's greatest railroad builder and the first to demonstrate that a farming country pays greater dividends per mile than any other class of country through which a railroad can pass, has also turned his eagle eye this way and noted the possibilities for the accomplishment of even greater feats than have been his in the past. Likewise has he in several public addresses pronounced the Last West "the country of the future." So who can say whose will be the first railroad to touch the Peace River and when its entry?

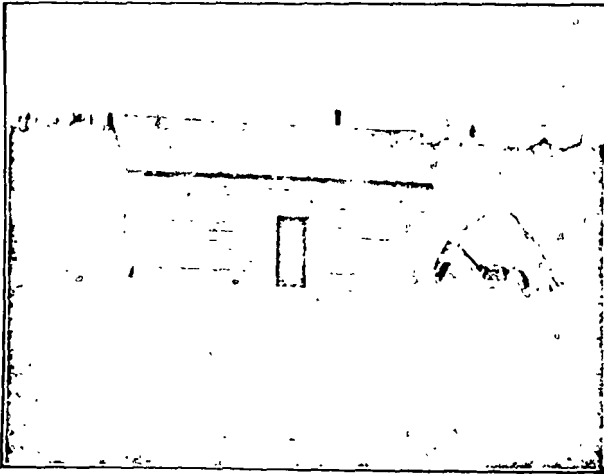
To me it appears that five years should be the extreme limit of time which the above named railroad powers will allow to pass before the entry of, at least, one of their roads into this virgin industrial field. And again, there are others able to build railroads. Five years has been ample time for many a captain of industry in embryo to do greater things. Be that as it may, from the best information obtainable at the present time, the

prospects are very good for the homeseeker of 1910 to travel to the Peace River by an all-rail route. Should this prove to be true, the future of that part of the Last West will be almost one with the future of this, from Edmonton, east and south, and that, we may pretty accurately judge from the history of the past five years.



A WORD TO HOMESEEKERS

The Hudson's Bay Company and Revillon Brothers, Limited, have stores at all the trading posts mentioned in this book, which are well stocked, transportation facilities considered, and where the traveller may purchase necessary supplies at a fair price, and be sure of receiving courteous treatment. To add to the convenience of travellers, each of those companies have a letter of credit system whereby one may, before starting, deposit a sum of money sufficient to cover the expense of a trip through that country and receive a letter of credit good for



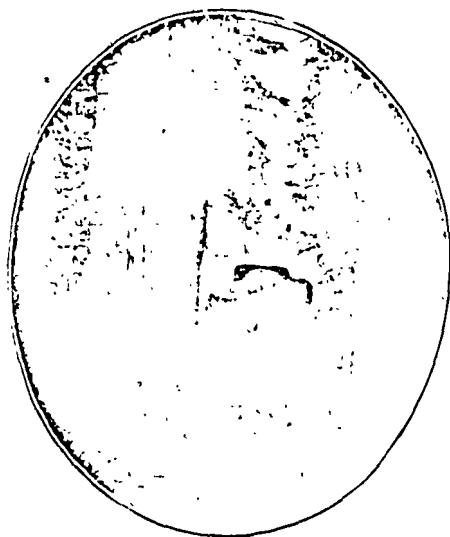
H. B. Co's Store, Hudson's Hope

transportation, supplies or cash at any of their trading posts, a plan very much to be preferred to carrying a large sum of money on one's person while on such a trip. Those who do not care to undertake the trip through the Last West entirely upon their own resources can arrange for transportation, supplies, etc., with either of those companies, and place themselves completely in their charge, with the assurance that the best accommodation procurable will be at their disposal.

Revillon Brothers, Limited, though they have only been engaged in the fur trade in the Last West a short time, have practically unlimited capital at their disposal, well equipped trading posts in charge of competent men, and are doing business on a scale which has placed them on a par with the great Hudson's Bay Company.

While there is naturally a keen business competition between these two companies, there is none of the blood-letting spirit which characterized the fur-traders of yesteryear.

The writer received only the most courteous treatment from the agents of both companies while travelling in that country, and in fact from all others with whom he came in contact.



A Stiff Climb

With the completion of the connecting piece of road from Athabasca Landing to Lesser Slave River in the early summer one may travel by team all the way from Edmonton to any trading post in the Slave Lake and Peace River districts except Vermilion. That then will be the best route and will enable the homeseeker to take horses and wagon with him. But remember that this is a new country and that the roads are new, so don't try to take a piano and a half-ton of patent revolving ding-bats on your first trip. If a homeseeker, you

will do well to go in and look the country over before you attempt to take in machinery and stock. Your equipment then should be the same as that of the ordinary tourist.



My Camp on the upper Peace

Until the above-mentioned piece of road is completed, there is a choice of two ways. After that is done there will be three. One may go then by team, by pack-train, or by boat and stage, whereas now it would be next to impossible to go all the way through by team during the summer.

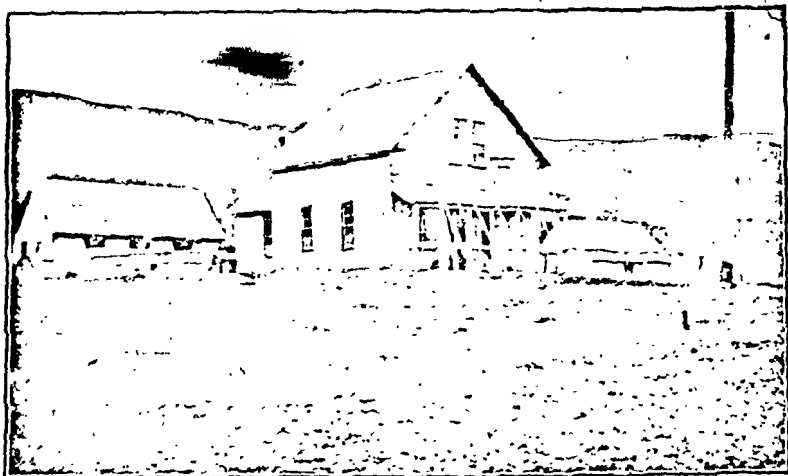
Equipment for one going by stage and boat or on horseback during the summer:

One outfit of bedding, consisting of a folding canvas cover with small light mattress attached; two pairs Hudson's Bay blankets; one mosquito net (can be purchased here or at trading posts); one frying pan; one tea pail; one stew pail; one knife, fork, and spoon; one plate; one cup; one butcher knife or hunting knife; comb, razor, and if fond of shooting a gun. A Winchester 30-30 carbine is best. Wear a good serviceable suit and boots, and take a change of underwear and socks, and one extra shirt. No other equipment is needed. A "grub stake" can be purchased at any of the posts. The nicest way for experienced travellers, who desire to see the country, is on horseback, with one pack horse to the man. The native horses when properly used will require no feed other than that which grows in plenty everywhere.



Accidents will happen

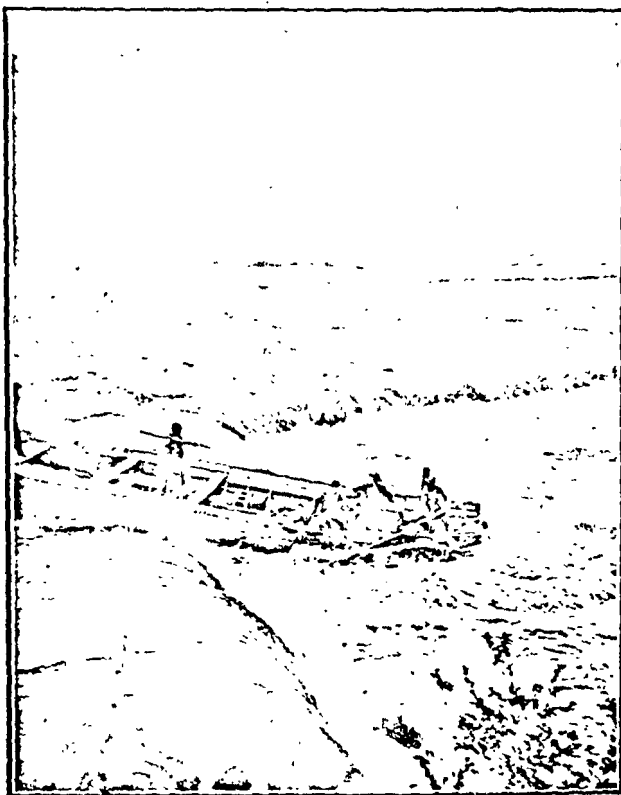
For the inexperienced I would recommend the "old reliable" route, i.e., to Athabasca Landing by stage, thence to Lesser Slave Lake with the Northern Transportation Company's boats, thence to Peace River Landing with a freight team, or in case of a party of more than four, a team may be hired,



R. N. W. M. P. Barracks, Peace River Landing

thence up or down the Peace River on the Hudson's Bay Company's steamer "Peace River," the regular schedule of which, with passenger and freight tariff, is published each year and may be obtained at Edmonton before starting. The total cost of the trip from Edmonton to Peace River Landing should

not exceed \$35 for each person; from the Landing to Hudson's Hope or to Fort Vermilion, about the same, which, being doubled, would make the total cost of the round trip from Edmonton to Hudson's Hope or to Fort Vermilion and return, \$140. This would take two months' time, but one desiring to look the country over should, of course, take more. Above all, do not load yourself down with luggage, as the freight tariff from

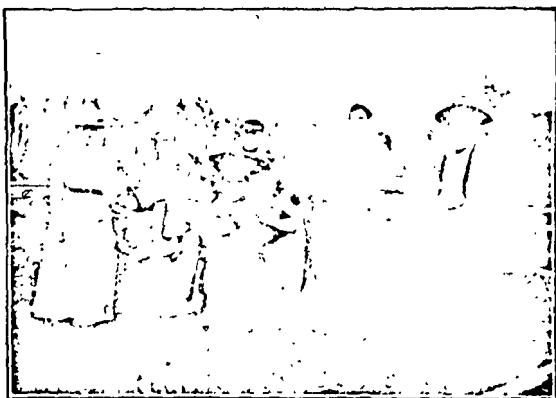


Shooting the Chutes, below Fort Vermilion

Edmonton to Hudson's Hope is 25c per pound, but even though one be in a position to disregard expense it were folly to carry anything but positively necessary articles upon such a trip.

One desiring to visit that country in winter will, of course, go by team, in which case the route is the same, as the winter road is on the ice over the waters upon which the boats travel in summer. Many freight teams travel this road, so that it is always in fair condition. There are stopping places at intervals of from ten to twelve miles, where shelter and food for man and beast can be had at reasonable rates, but it is advisable for one to carry a fair supply of oats, as the proprietors of the stopping places do not always have them. The round trip from Edmonton to Peace River Landing and return can be made with a good team and light sleigh in thirty days, and would cost \$1.00 per day for each person and \$1.50 per day for the team, or approximately \$100 for two men and a team.

I would not advise landseekers to undertake the trip in the winter, however, as winter travelling is none too pleasant in any country, and on this trail the regular travel of freighters is considerable, and a large inrush of landseekers, while the country is yet so new, would overtax the resources of the stopping places, and entail a certain amount of hardship upon all. But for summer travel one could ask for no more pleasant or interesting trip; my only warning is, "don't get in a hurry."



A Breed Family ✓

Whether travelling with horses or by the old Hudson's Bay Company route, take your time and you will have a pleasant trip and see that which will open your eyes to possibilities which perchance you had never before dreamed Canada possessed.

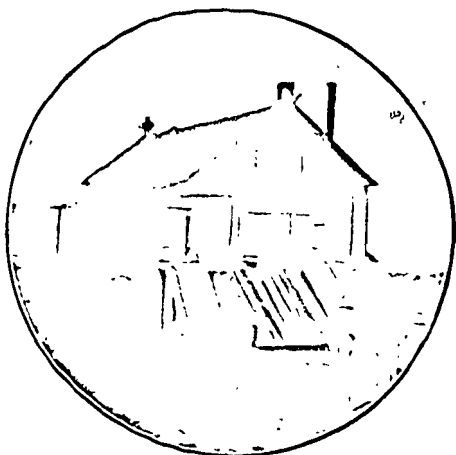
Any even-numbered section of Dominion lands in Manitoba or the Northwest Territories, excepting 8 and 26, which has not been homesteaded, reserved to provide wood lots for settlers, or for other purposes, may be homesteaded upon by any person who is the sole head of a family, or any male over eighteen years of age, to the extent of one-quarter section of 160 acres, more or less.

Entry may be made personally at the local land office for the district in which the land to be taken is situate, or if the homesteader desires, he may, on application to the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, the Commissioner of Immigration, Winnipeg, or the local agent for the district in which the land is situate, receive authority for some one to make entry for him. A fee of \$10 is charged for an ordinary homestead entry.

Under the present law, homestead duties must be performed in one of the following ways, namely:—

(1). By at least six months residence upon and cultivation of the land in each year, during the term of three years.

(2). If the father (or the mother, if the father is deceased) of any person who is eligible to make a homestead entry, resides upon a farm in the vicinity of the land entered for by such



Catholic Mission Sawmill, Lesser Slave Lake

person as a homestead, the requirements of the law as to residence prior to obtaining patent may be satisfied by such person residing with the father or mother.

(3). If the settler has his permanent residence upon farming land owned by him in the vicinity of his homestead the requirements of the law as to residence may be satisfied by residence upon the said land.

Application for patent should be made at the end of the

three years, before the Local Agent, Sub-Agent, or the Homestead Inspector. Before making application for patent the settler must give six month's notice in writing to the Commissioner of Dominion Lands at Ottawa of his intention to do so.

In the Athabasca Landing, Lesser Slave Lake and Vermilion districts there are a few townships surveyed and open for homestead entry. The balance of the Peace River District, with the exception of a few small allotments to the missions, trading posts, and to the Indians, is unsurveyed and not open to homestead entry, but the squatter's right, though not mentioned in the Dominion Land laws, has always been recognized and respected and is just as suitable in every way to the needs of the settler, whose motive is to make a home for himself and till the soil.

Any person eligible to make homestead entry may take a squatter's claim on unsurveyed land, by selecting an unoccupied tract of agricultural land, not to exceed 160 acres, the boundaries of which he will mark as best he may, building a cabin and establishing his residence thereon, for the purpose of cultivating and improving the land.

After a reasonable number of settlers have taken up their residence in this way upon land lying in contiguous territory they may, upon application to the proper authorities, have their land surveyed and make homestead entry in the regular manner.

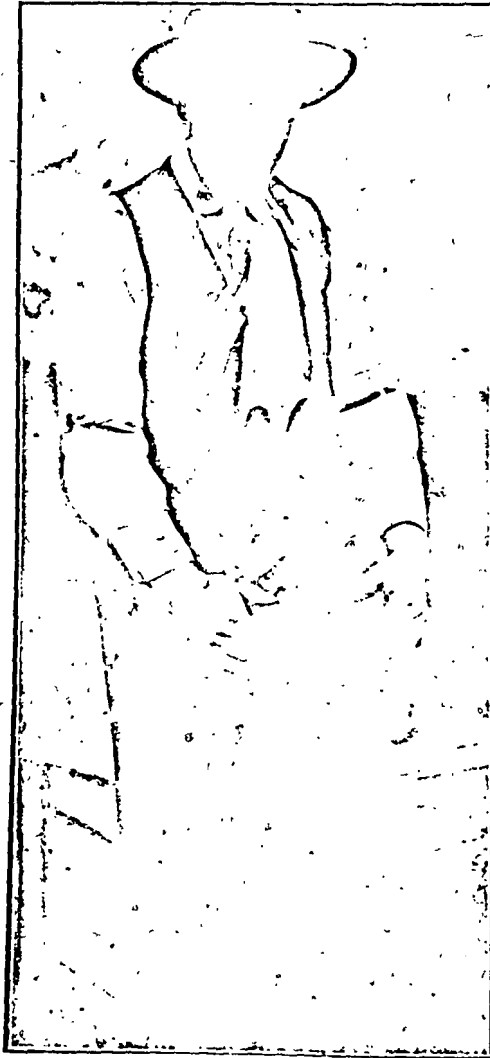
In making application for patent after survey has been made, the entry dates from the time residence was established upon the land, providing said entryman's name and location appear upon the surveyor's field notes, which is taken as evidence of his residence upon the land before the survey was made.

A squatter who is acting in good faith has ninety days preference over all other entrymen after the land is surveyed and thrown open for homestead entry.

A SIGN OF THE TIMES.

The following is taken from the Edmonton Journal of February 22, 1906:—

At the annual Board of Trade meeting, Thursday, the special committee on the extension of the Government telegraph



A New Found Friend

system brought in the following report, which was adopted on the motion of Messrs. Webster and Lessard:—

Your committee have found it extremely difficult to obtain anything in the way of data as to the amount of business that would be likely to pass over a proposed telegraph line to the Peace River, or the probable revenue to be derived. It is found,

however, that there are comparatively important interests between the present terminus of the Government telegraph line to Athabasca Landing and Peace River Landing, to which point it has been suggested that the line should be extended, and that such a line would be a great assistance in the conduct of business operations, between the country to be traversed, and this city, and would materially aid in the development of the north country.

At Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River Landing, it is learned that there are commercial and industrial enterprises whose aggregate total investment is estimated at not far short of a million dollars. This is not confined to one or two individual concerns, but is distributed among several trading concerns, various religious missions, and private individuals, all of whom find almost constant occasion to communicate with Edmonton and other centres of civilization. At present it takes anywhere from twenty-five to fifty days, depending on the season and condition of weather and water, to send a message from Peace River Landing to Athabasca Landing, and return. It is also pointed out that Lesser Slave Lake is the headquarters of a division of Royal North West Mounted Police, a detachment of which is stationed at Peace River Landing, to whom the proposed line would be undoubtedly of very great assistance in the prosecution of their duties.

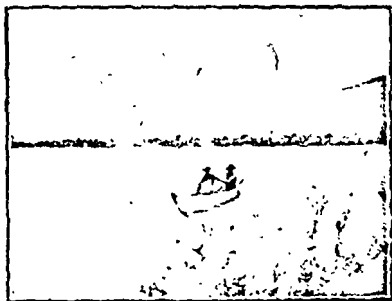
In addition to the interests already established in the country referred to, such a line would be of great value to more remote settlements, such as Fort Vermilion on the lower Peace and Dunvegan and the Grand Prairie settlements above Peace River Landing. There is now a very distinct movement of settlers into the last named locality. Your committee is advised of a single party, consisting of twenty-five families, who have arranged to go in during the spring. In addition, there are, in constantly increasing numbers, numerous parties of Government surveyors, railway engineers, prospectors, explorers, to whom the proposed line would be of assistance.

Your committee has not endeavoured to arrive at an estimate of the cost of construction or maintenance of the proposed line, as it is assumed that the Government would obtain from their own sources of information, data on the subject, when the matter comes under their consideration. It is learned that, in regard to one of the most important items, poles, this would not be an expensive line to build, as timber suitable for poles is plentiful throughout the entire distance. It is also pointed out that the wagon road which, it is understood, it is the intention of the Alberta Government to build from Athabasca Landing to Lesser Slave Lake, would be of material assistance in maintaining the proposed line. Beyond Lesser Slave Lake, the country being open, there would be no difficulty in the matter of maintenance.

It is pointed out that in the past, Government telegraph

lines have been constructed with a view to assisting in the development and administration of the country, rather than the production of revenue; and so far as our information goes, such lines have not been commercially profitable. There is reason to believe that the proposed line will be of fully as much service to the country as any of those constructed in the past; and will be at least as satisfactory from the point of revenue.

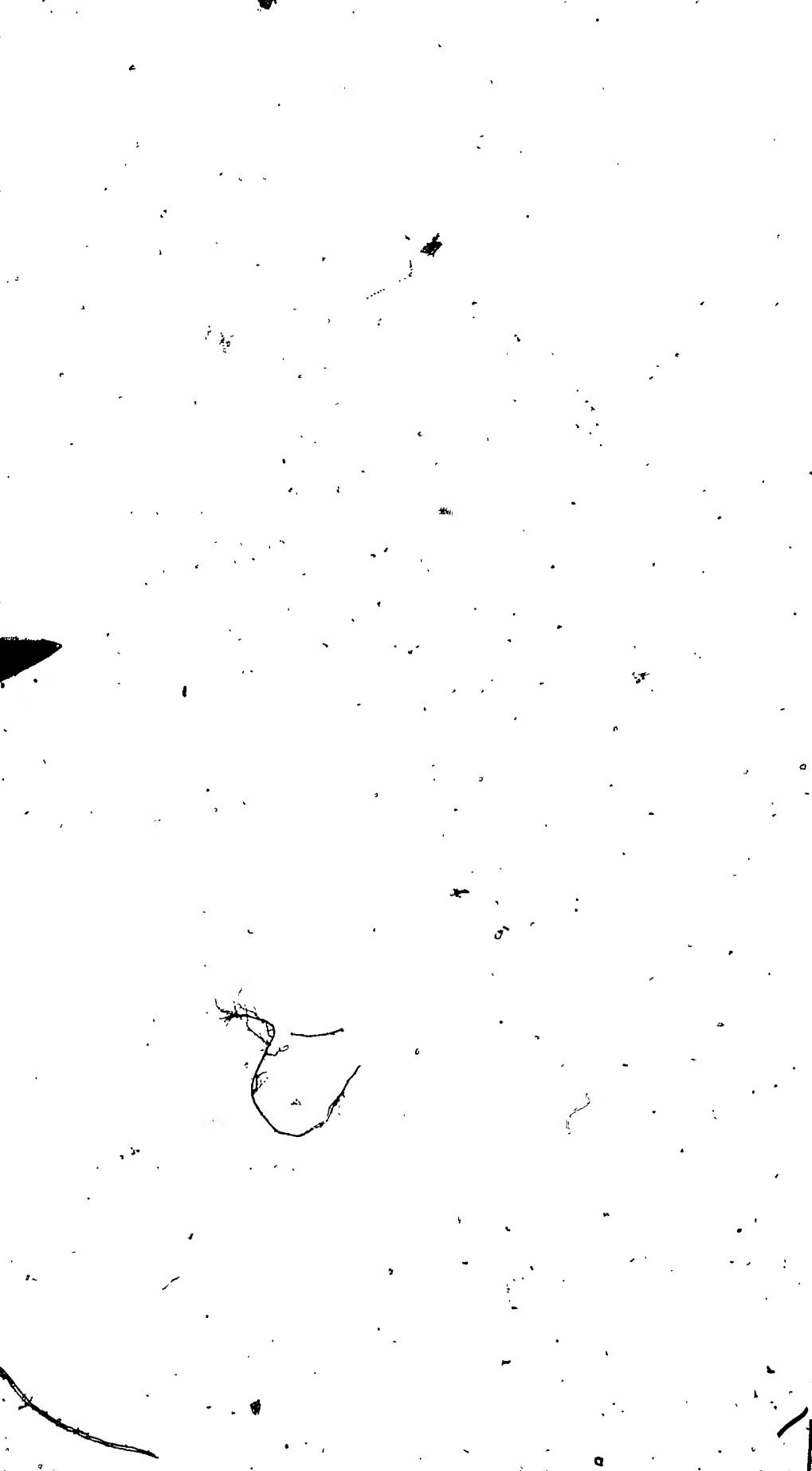
Your Committee, therefore, feel justified in recommending that the Dominion Government be urged to extend the Government telegraph line from Athabasca Landing to Peace River Landing at the earliest date practicable.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To W. W. Short, John Revillon, Allie Brick, the Lawrence Brothers, Ernest Brown, John Fielders, W. H. Footner, Captain Barber, J. K. Cornwall, and others who have assisted me in this work with pictures and information, or in other ways, I hereby extend my hearty thanks and appreciation.

A. M. BEZANSON



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